

Ethnicity

Identity, Conflict and Crisis

Edited by

Kumar David
Santasilan Kadirgamar



ARENA Press
Hong Kong

Ethnicity: Identity, Conflict and Crisis

ARENA Press: A4, 2/F, Block G, Hung Hom Bay Centre, 104-108 Baker Street, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

First published: 1989.

© ARENA Press 1989.

All rights reserved.

Cover design: Chandralekha, SKILLS, Madras 600 090, India.

Cover background: Detail from paper collage by Dashrath Patel.

Typeset: ARENA Press.

Printed and bound: Contemporary Development Company, Rm. 1505, Eastern Commercial Centre, 397 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong.

"The Conch", reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd., from *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Poems*, Translated by William Radice ©, 1985, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, Page 77.

ISBN 962-7156-09-4

This book concerning the conflict of minorities and majorities is dedicated to the anti-apartheid struggle and the people in South Africa where a minority oppresses a majority.

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of people, organisations and institutions. Our thanks to:

Penguin Books Ltd. and William Radice for permission to include the poem "The Conch" by Rabindranath Tagore, from *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Poems*, translated by William Radice 1985;

The United Nations University for permission to include the paper on "Ethnic Movements in Southeast Asia" by Teresa Encarnacion and Eduardo Tadem;

The Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches; the Church of Sweden Mission; the Algemeen Diakonaal Buro van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland; and the Churches' Commission on Participation in Development of the World Council of Churches, for their support and;

Lokayan, New Delhi, India for their support and contribution in organising the Delhi symposium in conjunction with the Ethnicity and Social Transformation Project of the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA).

We are especially grateful to Syed Husin Ali of the Institute of Advanced Studies, National University of Malaya, Malaysia; Mario Mapanao of the Research and Documentation Office, National Council of Churches, Philippines; Harsh Sethi and Smitu Kothari of Lokayan, Delhi, India; Surichai Wun'gaeo of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand; Anjum Rajabali and John D'Souza of the Centre for Education and Documentation, Bombay, India; and Dr. Takeo Uchida, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations University, for their personal interest and support at various stages of the project. We also thank Gowri Dange for her patient and meticulous copy-editing, Yamaka Junko for translating the foreword of Hanasaki Kohei from the original Japanese, David Mahoney for the final check of the manuscript despite his busy schedule, and Mr. P.K. Tse of the Contemporary Development Company.

Finally, a special word of thanks to Haretta Chick Siu Ha for her patient typesetting of the entire volume, and to Beena Sorab, ARENA Press publications coordinator, for her perseverance in steering the production to its final form.

The Conch

How can we bear to see your conch lying there in the dirt?
The tragedy of it cuts off air and blocks out light.

Warriors, rise, brandish your banners!

Singers, get up and sing! Doers,

Charge into action! Do not falter!

How can we let your inspiring conch stare up at us from the dirt?

I came to the prayer-room with an offering of flowers neatly laid out,
Longing to end my long day's labours with heavenly quiet.

I thought this time my heart's lacerations

Would heal; I thought my ablutions

Would purge me — till I saw the degradation

Of your great conch lying on the path, lying in the dirt.

What am I doing with this prayer-lamp, what do I mean by this prayer?
Must I drop my flowers of peace — weave scarlet garlands of war?

I hoped for a calm end to my struggles;

I thought my debts had been paid, my battles

Won, and now I could thankfully settle

In your lap: but suddenly your mute conch seemed to sound in my ear.

O change me, touch me with youth, alchemize me! Let fiery melody
Blaze and twirl in my breast, life-fire leap into ecstasy!

Let night's ribs crack; let skies,

As they fill with dawning enlightenment, raise

Terror in remotest dark. From today

I shall fight to seize and carry aloft your conch of victory.

Now I know I can no more close my eyes in slumber.
Now I know that monsoon showers of arrows must batter

My heart. Some people will rush to my side;

Others will weep and sigh in dread;

Horrifying nightmares will rock the beds

Of sleeping hearers: but today your conch will joyously thunder.

When I looked to you for rest I received nothing but shame;
But dress me for battle now, let armour cover each limb.

Let new obstructions chafe and challenge me;

I shall take all blows and hurts unflinchingly;

My heart shall drum redress for your injuries;

I shall give all my strength, win back your conch and make it BOOM.



Contents

Foreword		
<i>Hanasaki Kohei</i>		iii
Introduction		
<i>The editors</i>		vii
<i>Overview</i>		
1. Ethnic conflict: Some theoretical considerations		
<i>Kumar David and Santasilan Kadirgamar</i>		1
2. Ethnicity		
<i>Rajni Kothari</i>		15
3. India: Nationality formation under retarded capitalism		
<i>Javeed Alam</i>		45
4. Ethnic self-determination and separatist movements in Southeast Asia		
<i>Teresa Encarnacion and Eduardo Tadem</i>		70
<i>Case Studies I</i>		
5. Survival against development		
<i>Ed Maranan</i>		95
6. The Moro ethno-nationalist movement		
<i>Carmen A. Abubakar</i>		108
7. Ethnicity in Malaysia		
<i>Zawawi Ibrahim</i>		126

8. Taiwan's aborigines and their struggle towards radical democracy <i>Chiu Yen Liang (Fred)</i>	143
9. Parameters of ethnocide and ethnic consciousness: The Hmong <i>Nicholas Tapp</i>	155
<i>Case Studies II</i>	
10. Hindu-Muslim relations in contemporary India <i>Asghar Ali Engineer</i>	163
11. Lanka: Nationalism, self-determination and conflict <i>Santasilan Kadirgamar</i>	181
12. Roots and results of racism in Sri Lanka <i>Kumar David</i>	213
13. Ethnic conflicts in South Asia <i>Kumar Rupesinghe and Smitu Kothari</i>	248
<i>Conclusion</i>	
14. By way of a conclusion ... and a beginning <i>Lawrence Surendra</i>	277
The contributors	289
Index	291

Foreword

I am grateful and honoured to have been given this opportunity to write the foreword for this book, and am happy to be associated with a publication that is the collective effort of researchers, scholars and those actively engaged in peoples' movements and struggles in Asia. I believe the book will make a valuable contribution towards an understanding of problems of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Asia, demonstrate the need for further reflection and thinking and help forge closer cooperation among intellectuals and activists in Asia. I hope that I and others associated with similar work in Japan will be a part of the processes that the book generates.

In recent years the ethnicity question has become important in Hokkaido, the northernmost island of the Japanese archipelago. About four hundred years ago immigrants to Hokkaido from Honshu, the main island of Japan, increased. This led to conflicts with the indigenous Ainu people. The Ainu were defeated in several struggles and were gradually deprived of their land rights and resources. Exploited, oppressed and abused, they were practically reduced to the condition of slaves forced to work under the Japanese merchants of marine products. The Ainu population declined sharply in this period.

When a unified modern State system was established in 1868, Hokkaido was regarded as a colony of Imperial Japan, to be colonised by the Yamato race (Japanese) from Honshu. The Tenno, the Japanese emperor, was regarded as god and Japan a superior nation. The Ainu people were despised and discriminated against. A policy of assimilation was adopted forcing these people to give up their native language, religion, culture and customs. The ancestral lands of the Ainu were regarded as ownerless (*terra nullius*) and incorporated into the national land. The ideological justification for such a policy was stated as follows: "The Ainu are a primitive race since they have no letters. They are an inferior race destined to extinction. Their productivity is low and they cannot cope with the struggle for existence in a modern society in which the reigning principle is the survival of the fittest. Therefore, to have them assimilate with the Yamato, the superior race, is to save them." The Hokkaido Former Aborigines Law gave legal expression to this racist ideology.

The Ainu population is estimated at between 30,000 and 50,000. It is difficult to arrive at an accurate figure because many Ainu people do not disclose their ethnic identity, due to discriminatory policies prevalent in Japan. In addition to the Ainu, the victims of racial discrimination include some 670,000 Koreans living in Japan. This is a legacy of Japanese conquest and colonial rule in Korea. At that time Koreans were brought into Japan as forced labour.

From the 1970s I have been active in the grassroots movements of the Ainu peoples and their struggles in Hokkaido. In 1984, some of us participated in the Conference of Indigenous and Minority Peoples in Asia, at Baguio City in northern Philippines. The issues that figured prominently at this meeting included the role of multinational corporations in confiscating the lands of indigenous peoples in the name of development, the imminent danger of ethnicide which is one form of genocide, and the emerging struggles for self-determination. This exposure to the broader Asian scene made me aware of my own limited perspectives. The realisation dawned on me that we in Japan, including the Ainu people, should look at the problems within Japanese society in the context of the liberation of the people in the Asia-Pacific region.

'Ethnicity and Identity' is the theme of this book. It is presumed that the term ethnicity first appeared in the 1972 supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. There is no corresponding term in the Japanese language. In the post-war years the world witnessed the rise of national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the Third World ethnic identity and consciousness grew out of the political awakening and people's resistance to colonial rule and economic imperialism in the twentieth century. This had a direct impact on the victims of racial discrimination in the United States and other industrialised countries. Today, we are witnessing movements for ethnic self-determination in socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, China and Yugoslavia. In Japan, an awakening took place in the 1970s. Remarkable advances have since been made in developing consciousness about the identity and rights of the world's indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.

The 'theology of progress', which sees progress in commercialisation, assimilation, cultural unification, equality and freedom based on atomised and abstract individuals, is gradually collapsing. The awareness that such 'progress' is false is rising among people throughout the world. People everywhere are striving to strengthen their solidarity based on self-esteem and are involved in the pursuit of rediscovering their own history, culture and traditions. The international society of today is made up of peoples seeking a variety of identities. There is a positive content in this search for identity. But ruling elites use this very consciousness to perpetuate a narrow ethnocentrism and blind chauvinism. This leads to conflict situations. It is necessary that people be made aware of the need to guard against an authentic struggle for identity degenerating into narrow chauvinism, or the mere restoration of the rights and

culture of the particular group one belongs to. We must learn from the tragedies of the past.

In the United Nations, a draft Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights is being prepared for adoption by the General Assembly in 1992, a year that is rich in significance for indigenous peoples' movements. It is hoped that 1992 will mark a qualitative transformation in world history. That year will mark the quincentennial of Columbus' so-called 'discovery' of America which made the indigenous peoples of America invisible. The history of those five hundred years has been the history of the domination of modern nation states. The 1987 "Declaration of the World's Indigenous Peoples Concerning the 500th Anniversary of the Conquest of America," issued by the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, has demanded that 1992 be declared the "International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples."

The Universal Declaration on Indigenous Rights is still in its draft stage. Fifty-four articles have thus far been prepared. A variety of rights have been affirmed. Of particular importance are the references to the aggression and injury inflicted by the majority, the so-called 'civilised' ethnic groups, upon the indigenous minority ethnic groups over five hundred years of history. The demand for redress and reparations for the damage and injuries caused is firmly entrenched in the draft declaration. The main demand is that individuals be guaranteed rights as members of an ethnic group, and that ethnic groups be given adequate recognition and group rights, and that principles be laid down for future relations between ethnic minorities and majority groups based on equality and justice. In order that this declaration becomes a reality, the support of majority ethnic groups is essential. For this to be achieved, individuals of majority groups must conquer and overcome their ethnocentrism and prepare the ground for a world community founded on mutual respect, recognition of ethnic identity and human rights.

The affirmation of such rights is not meant to be exclusively confined to issues concerning ethnic groups. The liberation of indigenous and minority ethnic groups should have a sense of direction and encapsulate an ideological framework that includes the liberation of all oppressed peoples, such as the protection of the rights of workers who lose their jobs due to unfair labour practices, sexism and the exploitation of women, and those people whose lands are forcibly expropriated without their consent for the construction of dams, airports, military bases and nuclear power plants. The struggle of ethnic minorities is one powerful dimension in the on-going struggles of the oppressed.

The aspirations of peoples for equality and self-determination should be directed towards the creation of a society based on co-existence and the recognition of fundamental and equal rights for all people, and should aim at achieving unity in diversity. The need today is to foster a universal and world consciousness while nurturing the awareness of one's own ethnicity. We look forward to the day when those

who were left unrecognised and unacknowledged become visible, and that which has remained hidden shines in the light of day. We cannot sit by idly and wait for world history to change. We have to be part of the struggle, fighting against the tide, seeking to change distorted social structures and perceptions. This is the road that bears forth hope.

Hokkaido, Japan
June 1989

Hanasaki Kohei

Introduction

The peoples of the world, in every continent, have placed the struggle for democracy as the principal item on the political agenda of the final quarter of the twentieth century. The Third World, the capitalist countries and the communist States alike have been swept by these winds. The question of democracy is ever present at the centre of the political nexus, whether the struggle involves a movement against an oppressive regime, or one enmeshed with the class struggle for social change, and in other places, in the conflict between different cultural and linguistic identity groups that entwine the State. In this landscape, issues of identity have gained a new momentum.

Previously described as minorities or communities, the term 'ethnicity' is now accepted usage and is employed to describe groups of people whose consciousness about their identity is sometimes more powerful than even the official nationalist foundations of the State. It is sometimes powerful enough for nation-states to bring forth against them extraordinary acts of violence and counter-violence. In the situations that have resulted in twentieth century Asia, ethnicity occupies a dominant place. In India the patterns are kaleidoscopic. In the Philippines, it is interwoven with a history of colonialism and imperialism. In Sri Lanka, a civil war is overlaid by an Asian regional embroglio. In Palestine, Zionism projected the idea of a land without people, for a people without land and set in motion a conflict which has occupied the attention of the world for four decades. Imperialism, the conquest and subjugation of nearly the whole of Asia, and the subsequent process of decolonisation, sometimes, created and sometimes rejuvenated and released the forces that have led to today's conflicts.

The tragedy that is Lanka and the rapid pace at which events moved, to a very large extent, inspired and motivated this study. The Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), with an Asian orientation and regional reach, provided the venue and the auspices for several meetings and encounters to discuss, to inform and to be kept informed of the unfolding events in Lanka. The editors, together with ARENA coordinator Lawrence Surendra, were very much part of these continuing debates and discussions in and after 1983. From these emerged the need to broaden the scope of the discussion by undertaking a study of ethnicity and the crisis in Asia.

Work on this volume was initiated in 1985. The contributors and their respective contributions were finalised by the end of 1986. The contributors met in Delhi in January 1988. The contents of the chapters appear largely as written in mid-1987. Following the Delhi symposium the papers were revised though without major alterations. Events have moved rapidly between the time this project was initiated and the publication of this volume. Readers acquainted with the happenings in Sri Lanka would immediately note that vital events and changes that have taken place since the middle of 1987, with the exception of some brief comments, are not recorded here. The delay in the final publication was due to several factors, not the least of which was to find the financial resources. A work of this nature undertaken by First World scholars with the right connections would have elicited more than adequate support and funding. The same cannot be said of projects initiated by Third World activists with Third World commitments. A persistent query we had to answer as we sought support was "why another book?" Our purpose was not just another book. People, mostly innocent, are being detained, tortured, displaced and killed every day in this part of the world, in the context of ethnic conflict. This has happened since 1947. In relation to the immensity of the problem, relatively little has taken place in the nature of intellectual discourse, within Asia by Asians, interacting with one another. We hope this volume and the symposium associated with its preparation, will be a small but important step forward in an effort to bring together concerned scholars and activists to grapple with an issue that is tearing people apart. We intend to keep the process initiated through the book as an on-going project.

As initially conceived it was proposed that we cover the four major regions of Asia. We soon realised that it would require two volumes and would be well beyond our resources. We were therefore forced to restrict ourselves to South and Southeast Asia, leaving East and West Asia for a subsequent effort.

In recent years, with the emergence of Japan as a major economic power, issues of discrimination within Japan have assumed global significance. We are thankful to Professor Hanasaki Kohei for his foreword. He gave up his position as an Associate Professor in the Hokkaido National University to concentrate on issues of Ainu identity, oppression and forced assimilation. He is an active member of the Ainu Ethnic Study Society. His foreword provides us with an opportunity to focus on the predicament of a very small but nevertheless significant ethnic group in Japan, and to create an awareness among our readers that Japan is not quite the homogeneous exception that it is often made out to be in Asia, nor that its assimilation process has been without costs internally and for those in Asia.

From the outset, the word 'ethnicity' was used in a wide sense in the solicitation and compilation of material for this book. Although the dictionary meaning of 'ethnic' lays emphasis on the aspect of race, it is used in this book as a modern political term extending over racial, linguistic, religious and tribal alternatives.

There are two reasons for using the word in a generic fashion to cover various forms of majority–minority or multiple–group political dynamics in the modern world. Firstly, the common features in the manifestation of events of this type justify their being conceptualised by a single term. Words such as nationalism and colonialism, despite their myriad specific variations, have served a similar purpose. The second reason is the rather remarkable fact that the dynamics of one phenomenon, say case A, and of another, say case B, have been similar or dissimilar depending far more on the specifics of the total socio–economics and politics of each case, rather than on whether A and B were, or were not, both instances of racial or linguistic or religious conflict.

This raises one more point to which an answer emerges only gradually. Much modern writing has emphasised the importance of the cultural content of ethnicity. However, how significant has the concrete content of the specific culture been? It is one thing to assert that cultural parameters have been of fundamental significance in defining the identity of an ethnic group. It is quite another thing to assert that different cultural variants correspond to different forms of emergence and unfolding of ethnic movements. Ethnicity, as such, has indeed been an issue of explosive significance in the last decade, but which particular form of ethnicity it is, has been of less significance than parameters such as discrimination, constitutions, land, employment, army, authoritarianism and foreign involvement, in deciding the character of each sequence of events.

Hobsbawm argues in a similar vein about nationalism: “If nations and nationalism are seen as phenomena which develop within a specific situation and are determined by it, a good many of our difficulties disappear.”¹

The book opens with a four–chapter overview section. The first two chapters establish conceptual frameworks. The third is mainly a theoretical work which incorporates ethnic empirical material in consolidating a theory of capitalism in India. The fourth is an overview paper in another sense; it is a comparative analysis of four important Southeast Asian ethnic struggles. This is then followed by a series of case studies covering ethnic conflicts in the Philippines, ethnicity in Malaysia, the position of the Taiwan aborigines and the Hmong tribes in Southeast Asia. The final section consists of four chapters focussing on South Asia, especially India and Sri Lanka.

A remark about the attitudes and commitments of the contributors is in order. Although no conceptual methodology was deliberately imposed on the authors, it will be clear straightaway that what for brevity may be called the ‘views of the political right–wing’ have not been incorporated. And so there has emerged a collective space for a commonality of perspectives.

The authors did not come to this study as scholars, whatever their formal professions; they are persons with a tradition of active participation in various movements in several countries. It was heartening, but perhaps not surprising, therefore, that an adequate commonality in tasks, and to a significant degree even

broader programmatic attitudes, did emerge. We comment on some of these in the opening chapter.

The stables from which the participants were drawn, however, were sufficiently varied for differences in conceptual models to emerge. Two different paradigms are identifiable and their discussion and interaction are considered more fully in the closing chapter. At this point we will only prepare the reader to anticipate on the one hand a basically historical materialist orientation in some chapters, and a radical humanist approach in others.

This book and the symposium owe much to the time and effort put in by Lawrence Surendra. His association with and knowledge of concerned scholars, movements and the issues in Asia made it possible for us to bring together the several contributors to this book, both to write and to meet in Delhi. The symposium itself, so rewarding in its intellectual exchange, was organised by Surendra. He was in many ways the key figure behind the whole project. We thank him in the spirit of camaraderie for making this book possible.

The editors

Note

1. E. Hobsbawm, "Some Reflections on Nationalism," in T. Nositer *et al.* (eds), Imagination and Precision in Social Science, Faber and Faber, London, 1972, p.389.

1

Ethnic conflict: Some theoretical considerations

Kumar David and Santasilan Kadirgamar

This opening chapter is concerned with a sounder appreciation of the linkage between what have traditionally been considered as the 'materialist' and 'non-materialist' (culture, social consciousness) in relation to modern ethnicity and ethnic conflict.¹ The persistence of ethnicity, and indeed its revival, and the ubiquitous dynamics of minority struggles, makes it necessary to explore more fully the linkages between the more traditional idiom of class,² economics, social production, wars, invasions and the State as a political unit on the one hand and nation building, identity and the State as a unit of socio-cultural cohesion on the other. This chapter is intended to pose some of these issues in the hope that it will contribute to a balanced appreciation of the case studies in the subsequent chapters.

Ethnicity and the State before modern times

An identifiable group of humans is one of the basic material constituents of social organisation. Most clearly in primordial society, but in more recent historical times as well, the tribal, racial or for that matter the linguistic or religious group, defined the outer perimeter of the social unit that determined the organisation of production, the resolution of disputes and the defence of life and property. Hence, the linguistic or tribal identity group, has for millennia been a material fact defining the outer perimeter of the unit of social production and reproduction.

It was conventional in founding presentations of historical materialists to limit the appreciation of the material basis of society to the means and instruments of production and to the class structures which reflect the organisation of material production. However, the unit of social production, the outer perimeter of society, across which only limited trade and intercourse occurred in pre-bourgeois or pre-colonial times, is no less a material fact. The cultural persistence of ethnicity and

the revival of ethnic identity as colonialism withdrew were, in fact, solidly based on historical materialist premises. It is these premises that need to be more thoroughly adumbrated. The categories of means and relations of production as popularised so far are limiting, and hence the significance of the boundaries of the social unit in the context of ethnic revivalism.

An interesting contribution in this respect is the addition of the category 'conditions of production' to those of 'forces and relations of production' by Borochoy.³ Borochoy included the different geographic, historical and even anthropological contexts in which production took place under this category. While this contribution is useful for theoretical discussions on ethnicity and nationalism, it must be said that he carried it to the reactionary conclusion that the proletariat has a genuine and abiding interest in nationalism and ensuring stable conditions of production for its nation. Shorn of these narrow nationalist perspectives, as an explanatory category, his concept of the conditions of production can be used in a different and more useful context.

Land, the territorial unit, is an especially important perimeter since in most cases the unit of social production was circumscribed not only by a particular and defined set of peoples, but also by exclusive use of a portion of land, water, etc. Thus, it is not surprising that a recurring theme in the examples in the following chapters, which supplements, with equal force, the notion of group self-identity, is some concept of a homeland. Secessionist demands are rooted in a particular type of recent territorial social and economic history. Nicos Poulantzas, emphasising the importance of territory in the emergence of nation-states in Europe, refers to "history of a territory and territorialisation of history — in short a territorial national tradition concretised in the nation-state."⁴

Colonialism and imperialism possessed, among other things, the feature of the exploitation of one nation as a whole by another nation as a whole. This material fact of world economics and politics, to a degree, blocked the wished for unity between the workers of the metropolis and the peasants and workers of the periphery. Correspondingly, nationalism and national liberation too became ideologies and movements based on the material realities of exploitation of nations by nations.

Ethnicity, as an internal phenomenon of Third World society, possesses features which may well be illustrated in a parallel vein. There emerged a conflict between the attempt to establish a modern, integrated, frequently bourgeois State, and the parochial parameters of the smaller self-identifying communities which the State attempted to subsume. In conditions when the capitalist mode of production had not totally assimilated the whole of the nation, where class formation itself was still correspondingly incomplete, where remnants of older modes of production, social formations and cultural differences persisted, the necessary material conditions were at hand for regimes of crisis, for ethnic conflict and possibly for the collapse of the whole project of bourgeois nation-building. The material premises of ethnic conflict,

and the flawed project of modern nation-building on a capitalist and frequently authoritarian basis are, therefore, not difficult to see.

“What, then, are we to call those social realities of the pre-capitalist world where an old tradition of State unity coincides with the real linguistic and cultural unity?” asks El Kodsky.⁵ Leaving aside Kodsky’s terminological perplexity, we can observe that the social entities he refers to, are the very entities which were so often forcibly put together by colonialism and subsequently emerged as the composite independent nation-state.

Writing in the context of the emergence of European nationalism, Munck asserts: “Nations existed before capitalism,” and goes on to elaborate as follows:

“Yet it may be necessary for Marxism to recognise that a nation possesses a unique collective subjectivity, structured by language and a common economic history, which is specific to a particular people. To say that a social group has a common history and that it constitutes a particular type of community is by no means to deny the conflict between social classes which compose it. It is only to recognise that the concept of nation existed before the bourgeoisie created the nation-state.”⁶

Apart from the somewhat nebulous idea of the ‘structuring by language’, these remarks may be forcefully applied to the proposition that separated ethnicities existed before colonialism.

A commission of French Marxists makes much the same point when it says: “Behind the nation-state there exists another relatively independent concept, that of nationality. Nationality designates the community of culture of peoples, determined by an identical history and material conditions of existence.”⁷

It would, however, be a mistake to emphasise these pre-colonial or primordial parameters beyond the actual material significance which they retain in subsequent times. Colonialism itself has mediated and transformed these prior circumstances to varying degrees. Even pre-colonial history may have been profoundly different in different cases. Consider, for example, the difference between the case when different linguistic or tribal entities lived side by side as separate socio-economies until colonial times, and a case like the Muslim invasions of the Indo-Ganges plain, the establishment of a new ruling court, class and culture, and the large conversions of the indigenous population to Islam which overlaid an existing patchwork of languages and identities.

The State as the organising principle of the periphery is of immense significance in the persistence and the transformation of ethnicity. Where a linguistic-geographic unit, for example, persisted for millenia as a State and a separate entity of social production, the persistence of ethnicity, or its revival in the sphere of social consciousness a few years or decades after this State form is subsumed by another, is not an anomaly, but something to be expected. Where the material basis is destroyed

for longer periods the old ethnic consciousness is displaced by a new one — the Goths and Vandals become Germans. Ethnicities disappear and new ones emerge.

A controlled analysis demands that the injection of a prior material separation into the discourse, in general, only modifies and conditions an analysis which, fundamentally, is premised on imperialism, colonialism, and on the State, classes, politics and the economy in the post-colonial period. It is this larger picture which holds the key to appreciating why some, and not other, ethnicities have been activated. Why Sinhala vs. 'Jaffna' Tamil and not vs. Muslim or Plantation Tamil? Why the Hindu-Muslim polarisation and not united Bengali nationalism? Even more incongruous and startling has been the emergence of 'ethnicities' which, in a prior historical sense, never existed as ethnicities at all. As Javeed Alam discusses in Chapter 3, "diverse ethnic groups have moved closer together, with a persistent demand for recognition as a (single) distinct group with a national make-up," in the Jharkhand region of India.

What determines which ethnicities are 'selected' as poles of activation? Not culture, nor ideology, nor some nebulous structuring by language or religion, but an actual material history. Surprisingly, it is the study of ethnicity, thought to be a non-historical material concept which has persuaded us of the inadequacies of an idealist, that is anti-historical materialist, cognizance of history. Superficially, ethno-politics appears to be determined by identity and culture, but they themselves are selected, transformed and set in motion by palpable material linkages. The dialectics of conflict, in turn, further transforms ideology and constrains the material premises in new ways.

It is against this elaborated materialist background that we take up the remainder of this discussion.

In the following paragraphs we situate the political dynamics of ethnic conflict in the modern world in its relations to the State, economic transformation, violence and social crisis. The effect of the changes in the international balance of power and the influence of expatriate support are also seen as integral to these dynamics.

We also examine the crisis of ethnicity — that is the internal crisis of ethnic movements themselves. The impasse at which militant ethnic struggles have arrived is no doubt starkest in the case of Sri Lanka but, notwithstanding the special circumstances of Indian intervention, the real roots of the impasse are internal to the logic of the movement itself, and this is therefore a feature which is repeating itself elsewhere.

Inexorably this moves the discussion to that of perspectives: of the way out of the total social impasse founded on retarded capitalism, aggravated by a socialist alternative whose emergence is retarded and confounded by the impasse of ethno-politics. To our minds, the key issues are a new approach to democracy, that is democracy without homogeneity, and far more crucially, an identification of what alliances of classes and movements can underpin this minimum programme.

Let us now turn to a systematic discussion of these issues – the issues of the nature, manifestations and perspectives of ethnicity.

Ethnicity and class

Not surprisingly, when materially and therefore also culturally separate social entities are suddenly put together, ethnic loyalties persist over class solidarity. These peoples may have lived in proximity but were not one nation; they have been separate socio-economic entities. Furthermore, concrete analysis also shows that a superficial view of common class interests across ethnic boundaries in the post-colonial nation sometimes glosses over actual material differences.

For example, the differences between Tamil plantation workers and urban workers and also the further differences between these two and rural proletarians in the Sinhalese and Tamil heartlands of Sri Lanka. Or the differences between Malay and Chinese workers in the cities, plantations and mines of Malaysia. Or especially, the kaleidoscope of caste and class determinations in India. These are not merely ethnic; there are important differences in the actual relations of production themselves. The debility of the dominant capitalist mode of production and the survival of other modes, especially in the rural sector, is the reason for the lack of class homogenisation in the Third World.

This absence of capitalist/class homogenisation is one aspect. The other is that the principal classes which form the poles of capitalist production relations, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, are numerically swamped by other population groups. These include intermediate groups such as the middle class, and the petty-bourgeoisie properly speaking, which does actually occupy some intermediate position within the capitalist mode. There are also large segments which belong to survivors of pre-capitalist production relations or to bastard or peripheral or client production conditions which have sprouted around the principal capitalist mode.

It is to be expected from their location in the production process, and this is confirmed by experience in political activity, that religious and ethnic ideology, culture and custom, play a far more important role with these classes than it does with the principal classes at the theoretical poles – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The ideological parameters of these classes, therefore, need to be considered further.

Although the working class may be fractured along ethnic lines, and although the bourgeoisie is prone to racial and religious prejudices, the vital and active repository of ethnic consciousness in the Third World is this larger collection, for convenience usually referred to simply as the petty bourgeoisie, both rural and urban. The middle and upper strata of this class, traders and money-lenders, teachers, monks and *mullahs*, small businessmen and the ubiquitous agents and politicians, constitute the true repository of racial, linguistic or religious consciousness. Because of their education and money, they also succeed in giving leadership to the larger petty bourgeois mass of peasants, city lumpen and also to landless rural labour. When, due to the great

numerical preponderance of these classes, the tide grows, a section of the organised working class too begins to succumb.

There is a reason why this particular segment of the petty bourgeoisie functions as the source of modern ethnic consciousness. It is only indirectly to do with the fact that indigenous teachers, monks and *mullahs* have been close to local culture and may perhaps have championed religious or linguistic causes against colonialism and the Westernised elite in previous decades. It is more directly to do with social mobility in the post-colonial phase.

The rising expectations of this better-off stratum of the petty bourgeoisie, especially its aspirations for its children, converge on such issues as white collar employment and the professions, education and social acceptance. It is inevitable that a limited 'programme' such as this (limited as opposed to social transformation), given the parameters of ethno-consciousness out of which this class has issued, leads to competition and intolerance. Intolerance engenders conflict when the crisis of the economy shrinks the cake in relation to numbers and aspirations.

The class power of the bourgeoisie, which exists in the economic and social plane, functions in the political sphere through State power. In the context of the relative balances of power described in the previous paragraphs, it is not possible for an effete Third World bourgeoisie to hold State power except through alliances and adaptations with other classes. This is true even of military dictatorships in the Third World. The State power possesses a relative autonomy from class power, but that is not our point here; this autonomy does, however, explain how these class alliances are mediated.

Even in developed capitalism, the hegemonic bourgeois ideology has to accommodate and diffuse working class power through, for example, reformism, parliamentary democracy and so on, if it is to hold State power. All the more so in the far less advantageous position that the Third World bourgeoisie occupies; an unholy alliance with some or other petty bourgeois sector is the only way to hold State power.

The material and historical specificity of many countries was such, however, that this, in turn, made necessary ethnic oppression, discrimination or some similar consequence, as we briefly discuss in a subsequent section entitled 'Dynamics of manifestation'. This is the unfortunate history of the articulation of ethnicity with class in the first phase of ethno-politics.

Initially, political leadership of ethnic petty bourgeois movements was in the hands of traditional leaders or elders or seasoned politicians. However, an important second phase has unfolded in the countries where some form of bourgeois democratic system prevails, such as the Indian sub-continent. Striking examples are Punjab, Assam and Sri Lanka — both the Tamil north and the Sinhalese south. Leadership of the ethnic movements has passed into the hands of quite a different category — educated, usually unemployed, young people, drawn from much the same petty bourgeois class background. The rise of a new leadership has signalled a rising militancy of struggle in response to a deepening of the crisis and the exposure of the bankruptcy of the older leaders.

It is not yet clear whether similar changes are developing in other movements such as the Karens, Hmong, Shan and other peoples of the Golden Triangle, the Moros of the Philippines, in Indonesia, or in the Middle East. Since almost from the inception these movements took on an armed character, the question of a change of phase and pace does not appear to arise.

The emergence of militant youth leaderships has signalled a decided ideological shift. A far more leftist and Marxist vocabulary has come into use in some cases, a more fundamentalist one in others. Links have been formed with neighbouring countries or with foreign revolutionary movements or with communist countries, and some liberation programmes now promise a socialist solution. As we discuss later in the section entitled 'The crisis of ethnicity', the evolution of these tendencies has, however, been more tortuous.

Ethnicity as politics

Modern ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon. It mainly plays itself out on the plane of political action, in the arena of the State and nation. Certainly even modern ethnic revivalism does indeed incorporate elements of cultural, religious or literary renaissance to some degree. However, these parallel phenomenon are of a truly marginal nature and are totally subordinate to the commanding political dimensions of ethno-politics. This differs from the major cultural revivals that preceded and paralleled the nationalist movements that arose in previous periods in opposition to colonialism.

Class too manifests itself at the level of the political superstructure. Conceptually, classes exist at the level of the relations of production and manifest themselves politically at the level of social phenomena. So does ethnicity; we have already conceptualised its existence as the delineation of the perimeter of the organisation of the unit of production at the level of the categories of historical materialism. As with class, ethnicity too, sharply and naturally manifests itself at the level of daily political dynamics.

Modern ethnicity, indeed, manifests itself, above all its other manifestations, as a political phenomenon. Party formation, armed organisation and political ideology stand at the centre of language issues in Sri Lanka, and religious issues in the Middle East; and the similarity extends to Punjab, the Philippines and so on. Religious, literary and cultural creativity and flowering are in truth quite limited or entirely absent from a terrain dominated by a politics for which ethnic identity merely provides the defining focus.

The withdrawal of the colonial administration equates to the lifting of a veil which has hitherto obscured the inadequacies in the realities of national unification. The residues of the older social formations are reactivated. The persistence at the level of consciousness of corresponding ideologies with far more intensity than a mechanistic materialism might foresee, receives an enormous impetus from the conflicts and

dynamics of post-independent socio-economy and statecraft. New middle classes emerge and the new ethnicity is not a mere revival of old divisions. It is transformed dialectically by the crisis and contradictions of a new class society, the weakness of the contending classes and the inadequacies of the administrative, judicial and armed organs of State.

Dynamics of manifestation

The specifics vary, as the particular analysis in the case studies in the following chapters of the book well illustrate. Schematically, however, the following enumeration generalises the range of manifestations; leaving aside the general framework of imperialism and global capitalism, and the international balance of power, which forms the setting.

1. The extension of the bourgeois mode of production into the residual regions of the economy entails marginalisation or pauperisation of communities, genocide of tribal people and the manipulation of sectional interests.
2. The weakness (structural,* economic and ideological) of the bourgeois class or the bourgeois-landlord alliance, which inherited State power from colonialism, forces its ruling groups into variegated political alliances with sections of the petty bourgeoisie for the purposes of holding on to State power. Reactionary ideologies are the cement of these contracts; 'necessary' material-political alliances reflect themselves in the political-ideological plane, the sphere of consciousness, as hegemonic ideologies. The hegemony of the Sinhala chauvinist ideology for nearly four decades in Sri Lanka, the new deals with Hindu revivalism in India, and moves towards an Islamic State ideology in Pakistan and Indonesia, are examples.
3. The attempt to correct the unequal treatment meted out to different communities during the colonial period especially during the formation and expansion of the administration, bureaucracy and the army bedevils ethnic relations. Because of the reactionary alliances and ideologies noted in (2) above, the organs of State which are being built or expanded are frequently ethnically flawed, internally. This has important repercussions in Third World countries since the State is the big spender, the major employer and the provider of education, health and other services.

* Arising from the incomplete penetration of the nation by the dominant mode of production, the enormous political weight of the rural petty-bourgeoisie and peasant masses, and the threat to bourgeois political hegemony from sometimes powerful working class movements.

4. Not merely mass poverty and the apparently endless failure of economic growth, but even more sharply a crisis of expectations deeply affects the Third World. While there is indeed much absolute poverty, there is also relative poverty – relative to what every educated youth knows to prevail in advanced countries. There is an impatience for a decent life, education and a place in the sun. When leftist ideology fails to provide a quick answer to these expectations, false consciousness usually breeds crass racism or religious intolerance.
5. Even when economic growth does take place, the dynamics of the development itself exacerbates social tensions at another level and in more complex ways. The conditions in Punjab, India's most prosperous State, is the story of a ferocious ethnicity whose roots lie in more complex socio-economics than poverty and discrimination. The roots lie in the deformations of retarded capitalism.

The ideas (4) and (5) are put together in Munck's remark "In other words, uneven development can cause nationalism, whether at the poor or rich pole of the process."⁸ However, when he goes on to add "We could argue that 'uneven development' explains the economic basis of national divisions, but as with much of Marxism it leans towards economic reductionism," he appears to be out of touch with many excellent Marxist studies which integrate the historical dynamics of the total process.

6. The authoritarian State, more the rule than the exception in the Third World, arises from the weakness of the bourgeoisie, the corruption and nepotism of the ruling classes and the ferocity of the cycle of violence and counter violence in relation to national minorities. The authoritarian State is the harbinger of terror, violence and torture, but the ease with which ethnic militancy assimilates violence, often degrading and meaningless, leads to its own degeneration.
7. The welcome decline of colonialism and subsequently of US imperialist hegemony and the partial homogenisation of global power has, nevertheless, sometimes resulted in an "anarchy in interstate relations in the periphery."⁹ As an extension of this we can add that the weakness of Third World States and the interplay of external forces has resulted in the internal anarchy and fragmentation of the nation-state itself – Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Burma, and even the Philippines, though to a lesser degree.
8. The ease of communication and transaction on a global scale in modern times, together with the factors in (7) above, has stripped State power of its monopoly of physical force. This is a crucial technical change that has breathed life and stamina into armed ethnic movements.
9. Foreign involvement in ethnic militancy has proved to be a double-edged sword and the specific variations are numerous. Again, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and the Philippines are striking examples. The Tamil Tigers leant on India

and found they had a tiger by the tail; the Moros have found world Islamic support a source of funds as well as an agent of arm-twisting.

As we have already said the case studies develop more fully the particular analysis of which of these factors influenced each case, and to what degree they did. These particularities underlie the different phases and temporalities of development from case to case. In a sense the generalised summary is an abstraction from the experiences contained in the particular case studies. From this abstraction, however, one more generalisation appears to be warranted. In most cases a co-ordinating and unifying principle, adequate to service society's material aspirations, provide a hegemonic national ideology and constitute an armed and organisational national power, has not emerged. Neither a class, nor an alliance of classes, nor an institutional instrument such as an armed force or a bonapartist leadership-cum-State, has emerged with an authority adequate to accomplish the tasks of national unification.

In these circumstances it is natural that the very formulae of nation-building were deeply flawed. Distrustful of devolution, incapable of co-ordinating rational administration with the extension of democracy to minorities, or for that matter to the masses in general, and completely insensitive to the nurturing of pluralism -- that is what the flawed principles of nation-building have been.

Ethnicity in crisis

In almost every case the minority struggles depicted in this book represent the protest movement of an oppressed people. In almost every case the repressive machinery of the State has violated human rights and undermined democracy. In almost every case the militant movements or groups have, for a period at least, enjoyed great popularity among the people they claimed to represent. The authors and editors who have participated in the production of this book have done so, in part, as an identification with oppressed minorities, and in part, in defence of human and democratic rights and a commitment to the larger project of social transformation.

We recognise, however, that modern minority struggles are different from the former nationalisms which were always anti-colonial and anti-imperialist. Today a variety of alliances, sometimes against, and sometimes with imperialism, are evident. Laclau makes the following point about nationalism:

“Let us take an example: nationalism. Is it a feudal, bourgeois or proletarian ideology? Considered in itself it has no class connotation. The latter only derives from its specific articulation with other ideological elements. A feudal class can, for example, link nationalism to the maintenance of a hierarchical-authoritarian system of a traditional type -- we need only think of Bismarck's Germany. A bourgeois class may link nationalism to the development of a centralised nation state in fighting against feudal

particularism, and at the same time appeal to national unity as a means of neutralising class conflicts — think of the case of France. Finally, a communist movement can denounce the betrayal by capitalist classes of a nationalist cause and articulate nationalism and socialism in a single ideological discourse — ‘think’ Mao for example.”¹⁰

Thus, nationalist and ethnic movements can take on quite a different meaning — when linked to a different ideological domain — ‘think’ Sudetenland or Khalistan for example; reactionary ethnicity in one case and how do we locate the other?

We recognise also that modern ethnic conflicts may or may not appear to be rooted in a long history of antagonisms. Thus, the Sikhs and Hindus are not traditional enemies, but tradition is different in the case of Hindu–Muslim conflicts. However, we do contend that even where a history of antagonisms appears to exist, present ethnic conflicts are new issues arising from new social dynamics, as we have discussed previously, and memories of ancient wars and invasions are simply revived to do service on behalf of modern chauvinism. The usage of myths and stories of ancient Sinhalese–Tamil conflicts in Sri Lanka are an especially vivid example of the cynical creation of false consciousness.

As Ernest Gellner writes, “Nationalism is not the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it presents itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organisation, based on education–dependent high cultures, each protected by its own State.”¹¹

In discussing the crisis of ethnicity it is essential to appreciate that there is an important difference between supporting the rights of an oppressed minority and harbouring illusions about the political programmes of many ethnic ‘liberation’ organisations. The political and economic programmes put forward by these organisations are often untenable and are, sometimes, downright reactionary. In other cases they may indeed possess a healthy and progressive thrust. Frequently, we have a third variant, a somewhat garbled programme, but in the realities of struggle, such movements subordinate the progressive content to terror, fundamentalism and plain ignorance.

The crisis of ethnicity manifests itself in two ways — as a crisis of the programme, which is seen more and more clearly to be untenable, or as a crisis of the dynamics of struggle, that is a dead–end or a no–win situation. The actual manifestations can be very painful and different aspects are evident in Punjab, Sri Lanka, Burma, the Philippines, and so on.

These painful manifestations include on some occasions an alienation of the ‘national liberation’ organisation(s) from the very peoples they intend to represent, and sometimes even their reduction to small, sectarian groups or armed bands, and in some cases intense factionalism and even internecine slaughter of great ferocity. This process of alienation has occurred less with the struggles of tribal peoples than with the larger (Sikh, Tamil, Moro) ethnic movements as the case studies illustrate.

It is now at least a decade since a clear realisation emerged that the failure to adequately address minority issues has precipitated a major crisis in the nation as a whole. The close student of the interior of the movements themselves, however, is only more recently becoming aware of the seriousness of the crisis 'within' ethnicity. To the editors of this book, the two-year programme of studies and discussions that preceded publication, was itself a period of evolving perspectives in some of these respects. The rapidity of changes in the dynamics of ethno-politics is startling for a social phenomenon of this scale; it is also extremely complex because of the interplay of so many factors as outlined previously. A cautious, analytical approach develops theory too far behind times to be of any use to praxis; to think on one's feet and keep pace with real events is necessary, but also prone to errors or misjudgements.

Sounding the conch

Tagore's poem at the beginning of this volume exhorts us to sound the conch firmly, clear our sights and go forward. There is no room for lacklustre pessimism. In the closing paragraphs of this chapter we put together our thoughts in response to the question: 'What next?'

The sharpness of the crisis, the horrifying intensity of the violence and the non-immediacy of the promise that the impending socialist revolution will sanitise society, have provoked many people, even on the left, to look for transitional programmes. The urgency of eliminating meaningless violence must not, however, obscure the reality that even this cannot be done simply by cease-fires, but only if social justice is reworked into the nation-building project. There are clearly three essential elements to the way forward; education, a democratic programme and, thirdly, the identification of the social actors to implement it.

Social education, real raising of consciousness, is a *sine qua non* if racial strife and religious wars are ever to be stopped. In the Third World we have 'educated' elements ignorant of the notions of human equality, without respect for and knowledge of other cultures, insensitive to justice and unaware of the pluralism of democracy. The discourse on nation-building that many are already deeply engaged in at grass-roots levels is in truth an educational exercise deserving of massive expansion. Peoples' movements, political organisations and racial-equality movements have to carry the responsibility for these efforts.

Democracy consists of many elements. In the context of this book there is one particular element that needs to be emphasised. Democracy is incompatible, in multi-ethnic Third World societies, with homogenisation. Both the constitutional framework and development strategies appropriate to the fostering of cultural (and territorial where relevant) pluralism have to be discovered *sui generis* in each case.

Speaking of nationalism and the modern State, Gellner is of the view that there "is an objective need for homogeneity which for better or worse manifests itself as nationalism."¹² It would appear then that, in his view, homogeneity must be enforced

or the project of nation-building will flounder. It is difficult to see an objective justification for this generalisation in the sense that, classically, even capitalism would demand only the homogeneity of the unified internal market and regularity of class division. The erasing of cultural diversity is no objective necessity. Again, conceptually and in theory, federalism, cantonment systems and other constitutional and political arrangements, for devolution, are not objectively incompatible even with capitalist economics.

In any case what has ignited ethnic conflict is not the rush towards homogeneity, but intolerance born of political specifics such as we have summarised in general terms in the preceding sections. The link between these specifics and retarded capitalism is, of course, an objective one.

The fact, however, is that irrespective of whether one emphasises the material linkages or the ideological issues as the cause of ethnic conflict, one of its major consequences is extremely clear. There has been created a heightened sense of ethnic consciousness, a more assertive sense of specific identity, in every community involved in a modern ethnic conflict. It is indeed true that ethnic consciousness is less an inheritance from ancient times and more a sharpened and heightened ideology created by recent, sometimes bitter, events. Altogether more reason why the new democracy must willy-nilly come to terms with this. It has to be a democracy which is in tune with this new ideological reality. It has to be a pluralist democracy whose instruments and mechanics are such that a homogeneous cultural environment is not one of its necessary parameters.

Finally, on the matter of political actors and their roles; it is not editors of books, but those engaged in the real living process of making history who can discover the precise alliance of classes, movements and leaders that can address these issues. But as they act, they must think aloud, and share with others their experiences in this transnational venture. For ourselves, we are only convinced that the key is in the hands of the actors who are on the side of socialism.

Notes

1. Although there has been an enormous outpouring of literature on ethnicity, or on specific ethnic conflicts, very few have succeeded in placing it in the context of the parameters of capitalism, imperialism, material conditions of society and class struggle and class ideology. Conversely the staple texts of historical materialism have completely ignored the ethnographic perimeters of economic production.
2. An excellent example of a concrete study which intertwines the material realities of class and ethnicity is Class, Race & Colonialism in West Malaysia, by Michael Stenson, published by the University of Queensland Press in 1980.
3. B. Borochoy, Nationalism and the Class Struggle: A Marxian Approach to the Jewish Problem, Greenwood Press, Westport, pp.157-166.
4. N. Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, New Left Books, London, 1978, p.115.
5. A. El Kodsky, "The Social Revolution and the East." Review, IV, 1, 1982, p.7.
6. R. Munck, The Difficult Dialogue: Marxism and Nationalism, Zed Books, London, 1986, p.152.

14 Ethnicity

7. Commission Bretagne LCR–Brest, "Marxisme Revolutionnaire et Minorities Nationales," Critique Communiste No. 10: Marxisme et Question Nationale, 1970, p.25.
8. R. Munck, op. cit., p.148.
9. Giovanni Arrighi, "A Crisis of Hegemony," in Dynamics of Global Crisis, by Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, MacMillan Press, London, 1982, p.68.
10. E. Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory, New Left Books, London, 1977, p.160.
11. E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, Basil Blackwell, 1983, p.48.
12. E. Gellner, "Nationalism," Theory and Society, No. 10, 1981, p.767.

2

Ethnicity

Rajni Kothari

A new 'spectre' is haunting the power elite of our time. It is the spectre of ethnicity, variously expressed as assertion of cultures, communal upsurges, revivalism of religions, voices and 'movements' of marginalised peoples, regions and nationalities. It represents the affirmation of diversity, of indigenous authenticity, of organic as against televised or museumised cultures — or classicised cultures as found in ancient texts. But it takes other and quite opposite forms too. In its defiance of the modern nation-state and Western technology, it too takes on homogenised and monotheistic forms, destroys diverse boundaries and identities that come in the way of its messianic sweep, gets militarised, and stresses revenge and martyrdom in the cause of 'victory' rather than sublimation and transcendence of the immediate. In doing so it undermines the finer qualities of the sacred and the mystical and emphasises hard 'fundamentalist' notions of religiosity, culture and ethnicity.

At the present juncture of world history ethnicity takes on both centralising and decentralising, dominating and liberating forms. Its more humane version respects plurality and 'includes' other identities. Its more angry and defiant version is monotheistic and 'excludes' others. What is more, the two are found to be caught in a strange partnership against the more secular and 'scientific' drives of the modern State and modern capitalism. So long as this happens to be the case, the future of ethnicity as a mode of shaping human prospects will remain unclear. Equally unclear is how ferocious and aggrandising or temperate and compassionate it will turn out to be.

Much else is unclear too. Whether, for instance, the search and drive for authenticity and dignity will undermine prevailing unities (both political and civilisational), or provide a more enduring basis for a new and more creative unity. Whether under its sweep 'people' will come into their own and provide the basis for democratic transformation or new forms of hegemonies and whether even fascist control will take shape. Whether in their new political incarnation Shiite, Sinhala,

Malay, Melanasian and Hindu ethnicities will bolster statist and militarist regimes or regain genuinely religious and cultural roots. If the former, what will happen to the various 'minorities'? If the latter, will they be willing to move away from the present tendencies towards majority chauvinism in these regions? Both possibilities exist on all these questions.

In order for the precise outcomes to be clear, the leaders and intellectuals of various ethnic movements will need to deal with basic theoretical issues, in turn based on somewhat detailed analysis of trends that have already crystallised and the emerging prognosis. This essay is an effort in that direction.

No matter how uncertain the future unfolding of the upsurge of ethnicity will be, the sources of the upsurge — the reasons for it — are fairly comprehensible (even if subject to finer points of debate).

Ethnicity as a response to homogenisation

Ethnicity is a response — including reaction — to the excesses of the modern project of shaping the whole of humanity (and its natural resource base), around the three pivots of world capitalism, the State system and a 'world culture' based on modern technology, a pervasive communications and information order and a 'universalising' educational system. The project of modernity entails a new mode of homogenising and of straitjacketing the whole world.

There have been many other modes of homogenisation throughout history — through custom, through authoritative hierarchy, through a theology and a meaning system interpreted by an assigned clergy for lay populations inhabiting diverse spaces. Modernity is not the first 'universalising' credo. There have been others before it. In fact the notion of the universal appeared in other civilisations — the Indian, the Chinese, the Egyptian and the ancient Greek — long before the universalising claims of the modern Occident.

What is new and distinctive about the modern Western conception of universalisation — and homogenisation based thereon — is a three fold claim. First, it is the first effort to project a particular into a universal, expecting the rest of the world to accept the worldview and organising principles of that particular. Second, it is the first effort to universalise secular and temporal space; earlier efforts at universalisation were of a transcendent nature, the quality of the universal being a state of communion between the individual and the ultimate. Third, the modernist perspective on universalisation and homogenisation is colonising, necessarily rejecting all other universals and castigating them as a historical and anachronistic or at best historical antecedents to this more 'scientific' and 'rational' and hence superior universal. It is a mode of homogenisation that takes upon itself the task of fragmenting and splintering all other social and ethical cohesions, undermining all other unities and imposing its globalising will and power on all others. It is the first claim to universality

that leaves no one out of its domain. Every other entity or belief system is by definition illegitimate. There is only one legitimate structure of power, morality and truth. All others are invalid.

Ethnicity represents a powerful rebuttal to this paranoid drive of the modern project of fashioning the world after the idea of a world that came from the Occident which has almost succeeded in subjugating the immense diversity and richness of the human experience. Ethnicity is an affirmation of all the 'others' who were sought to be brought under, colonised and in course of time excluded and dispensed with. This is why, culturally and regionally speaking, there is more ethnicity in the South than in the North (though of course there are a lot of Souths in the North too).

This then is one and perhaps the most potent source of ethnicity and its basic location in the historical process. But there is a second source, closely related to the first, but located by and large within the South. It is a response to the North within the South. To the homogenising thrusts of capitalism, the nation-state and technology. To regimes that are engaged in integrating diverse social formations into a global marketplace. To the claims of secular authority to superiority over and legitimate exclusion of other entities and worldviews, similar to the claims of the Occidental project.

Most societies of the South, prior to their achieving independent statehood, were described as 'ethnic patchworks' that, they were told, needed to be replaced by homogeneous and centralised nation-states that would undertake to 'integrate' all diversities and cultures into one common mould. This too, like the global project, was carried to excesses and undermined the fine balance of antecedent civilisations.

Ethnicity represents a revolt against this. It is an affirmation of the hitherto subdued and excluded, reflecting deep stirrings of consciousness as well as emerging capacities of challenging hegemonies, engaging in a recovery of both civic and sacred spaces that are sought to be overtaken in the ruthless march of modern economism, statehood, and technology. And in many instances it is an affirmation of the local, the regional and the 'ethnic' against internal colonisation that has often accompanied the more pervasive and corrosive forms of nationalism of the nation-state.

In the past, particularly in Europe during the nineteenth century, ethnicity became a basis for new and emergent nationalism, struggling to be born out of heterogeneous imperial States. The more recent assertions of ethnicity are, however, pitched against existing nation-states and the hegemony of the national centres. They may themselves at times be expressions of new 'nationalities' and may even strive to become new nation-states (carved out of larger ones), but even then they represent assertions of diversity and plurality. It is by no means clear that the new social and political formations that will emerge out of the ethnic upsurge will necessarily prefer to take the same old form of nation-state. Not only is the States system based on nation-states in crisis; the experience of individual nation-states too has been highly disappointing, particularly on the part of cultures under attack. The nationalism of these nation-states is found to be oppressive and paranoid.

A response to majoritarianism

Among the many negative 'transfers' from the West to post-colonial polities in the Third World are the notions of majority and minority and the idea that both legality and legitimacy are based on 'majority rule'. These notions have been particularly baneful for plural societies. These societies had for centuries survived without these concepts. They had survived on two main grounds: respect for various diversities and notions of multiplicity, co-existence and togetherness. These were by no means always easy grounds to live with. Outbreaks of social tension and even group violence were not infrequent. There were also many structural inadequacies and many forms of domination by the more powerful and the more clever and deceitful. But the latter were not necessarily more numerous; more often than not they were small groups, often single families or clans. In any case there was no attempt to foist the will of a 'majority'. Nor did the poorer or oppressed strata suffer from any 'minority complex'.

Even today, the claims to being in 'majority' and the 'rights of a majority' are hardly ever pressed by large masses of the people belonging to the so-called majority community. It is invoked by a small number of people speaking 'on behalf of' the larger numbers, seeking their sanction on imported ideas of majority and minority. The so often invoked sentiment of 'threat to the unity of the country' is brandished by a small section of upper class and upper caste people who speak of the threat coming from minority communities, of the minorities having been given too much licence or having done better economically and of the majority having been at the receiving end because they had so far remained disunited and unmindful of their 'natural' rights.

Majoritarianism has emerged as the creed of some paranoid individuals who then try to poison the minds of an entire community who happen to be diverse and differentiated (castes, occupational groups, linguistic groups, even groups having diverse religious symbols and community-based godheads), but who are asked to 'stand together' as one large and numerous mass and face the 'threat' from the 'minorities'. The large mass of these people do not want this, their sense of identity is diverse and multiple, and the idea of their being a majority is a synthetic product of self-proclaimed defenders of the 'unity' of a given faith or religion which had in fact all along encompassed a series of diverse entities.

Thus the Hindus, or the Malays or the Sinhalese (or the Sikhs in Punjab), have always been large umbrella concepts encompassing a wide spectrum of distinct social and cultural and even religious identities. Often, as in the case of the Hindus, the concept itself is not indigenous, but given to them by visiting (or invading) outsiders. It is only with the advent of a synthetic (as against eclectic or agglomerative) ideology of unity and the modern concept of an arithmetic plurality, both reinforced in reaction to the 'others', that majoritarianism has made its way into the mass mind.

In turn the paranoia of the majority is matched by the paranoia of the minorities. Pushed to the wall by the growing accent on numbers in a 'democracy', feeling betrayed by the State that had, to begin with, provided a sense of security to the minorities who had in turn remained loyal to the government and the dominant party in control of the

State, and feeling discriminated against and pushed around, there develops that curious psychic state called the minority complex.

A sense of inferiority envelops this psychic state, fear and insecurity grips the mass mind and there soon develops a deep sense of alienation from the system, the State and the nation. This in turn produces fanatics and fundamentalists who take on an aggressive stance, and call for a closing of ranks (the minorities too are not monoliths, nor is that their view of themselves as they encompass a great deal of diversity and differentiation) and sow the seeds of a separatist psychology: "We're not needed here so let's get the hell out of here!" The small groups that continue to struggle against such a tendency (and 'dare to belong' in Baljit Malik's ringing assertions after the November 1984 carnage of the Sikhs in India), soon get branded as timid and compromising the integrity and honour of the community.

Yet, as the opposite of this aggressive stance, there also grows an even more frightening tendency (frightening from the point of view of democratic ethics) — of falling in line, simply to survive! There develops a psyche of the defeated and the helpless, of being embarrassed to oppose dominant tendencies, of straining to be 'fair' to those in power and, on the contrary, to be indifferent to the plight of the oppressed and the discriminated — in the process accepting marginalisation of the self and the community by default and as a *fait accompli*.

This tendency is greatly reinforced in periods of stress and insecurity, of violence and vendetta: the insecurity gets internalised by individuals, groups and entire social strata. Such a state of mind then turns into fear psychosis on the one hand and narrow opportunism on the other. Playing safe is the most pervasive form of opportunism, producing the phenomenon of so many 'sell-outs' who are hated from within and held in contempt (even while being used) by the majority.

The same state of mind, however, foments deep alienation and discomfort with those belonging to the majority, communication channels get choked up and increasingly each side gets distant and estranged from the other. With this the fundamentalist appeal grows and the call for 'standing together' gains fertile ground. It is in this context of a growing sense of alienation from the 'other' that all calls for 'unity' in effect become calls for disunity with respect to the larger nation or the State.

Such a paranoia of the minorities, in yet another chain reaction, reinforces the paranoia of the majority, now generating a strange tendency of adopting the style and stance of the insecure minorities. The result is an insecure majority that somehow feels beleaguered by minorities that are seen as having more clout (economic prosperity, access to arms, foreign support, constitutional guarantees, what have you). This gives rise to not just the majoritarian chauvinism that is everywhere in evidence, but a new kind of fundamentalism of the majority. It is fundamentalism that breeds on and takes its cue from the fundamentalism of the minorities. Communities that are more numerous are everywhere more diffuse, internally plural and tolerant of a lot of ambiguity. This is now sought to be reversed.

The Hindus, for instance, are called upon to close ranks, adopt a unified theology and one common doctrine, a clergy that is ordained and a common 'book' — in short, they are being asked to 'Semitise' or 'Islamicise' themselves. Which is a far cry from the highly plural and decentralised landscape of traditional Hinduism. Somewhat similar tendencies are at work among the Sinhala Buddhists and the Islamic Malays and Indonesians.

Negative ethnicity: Communalism

With all this, the regenerative and holistic dimensions of ethnicity or community get transformed into negative and exclusivist ones, giving rise to the virus of communalism as the term has been interpreted in South Asian and nearby countries.

Communalism can have two meanings. In a positive sense it means consciousness of common identity of a group of people based on their cultural heritage (language, religion, caste, region, etc.). In plural societies, such ethnic identities have always existed. They have been positively experienced and expressed. Positive consciousness of communal identities in culturally diverse contexts has, by and large, been associated with two other characteristics: (1) a mutual respect for other identities, and (2) a possibility to live and celebrate diversity organically, as parts of a whole. This is what unity has meant, a unity of diverse parts of society. The possibility of diversity in the context of positively felt identity has been the basis of stability and security for people — in our mixed villages, *mohallas*, and inner cities.

As against this there is the negative sense of communalism which is based on an exclusivist identity that denies respect for other identities and thinks of unity as something to be achieved not organically but by subjugating the other.

Similarly, secularism too has two opposite meanings, a typically Asian (Indian or the original Ceylonese), one with which we began, and a typically Western one to which we seem to be moving. According to the former, there was no rejection of religious or cultural identities but equal respect for them all. While the State itself adopted no religion, thus denying any official sanction to a particular identity, it guaranteed protection to all religions and belief systems (including atheistic belief systems). According to the latter more homogenising and all-pervading meaning, religion and culture are to be pushed out of the domain of the State and civil society is to find its unity by surrendering its diverse cultural terrain to the modern State with its modernising missions.

The latter version of 'secularism' as a project of the modern State has been aimed at removing these diversities and undermining allegiances based on religion, language or race. Similarly, development and modernisation of the socio-economic structure are to be viewed as creating conditions for 'modernising the minds of the people', making them move into a post-ethnic consciousness.

The paradox of modernisation has been that instead of helping religious, linguistic and racial differences 'wither away', it has actually hardened cultural and

ethnic identities and provoked ethnic conflict and communal violence. But much worse, it has transformed positively experienced identity and diversity into negative identities. It has given a negative meaning to communalism in which self-identity is perceived and defined as the negation of the other, and vice versa.

The two characteristics of a culturally diverse society, of living with other identities and feeling a unity with them, are no more possible. Identities have not withered away — what have withered away are conditions under which diverse identities can together share a social space. Identity has thus been negativised, it has been reduced to a negation of the 'other'.

Cultural survival has been reduced to meaning the removal of the other, the exclusion of the other, the death of the other. Outbreaks of communal violence are not expressions of a feeling of religious identity *per se*. They are expressions of the perversion of positive and diverse identities into negativised and fractured ones.

This transformation of cultural identity is most severe where the all encompassing thrust of modernisation has been most accelerated and pervasive, e.g. in Punjab, the land of the green revolution and in Gujarat, the land of the white revolution. The same tendency has been reported from the Philippines where these two 'revolutions' were pushed through.

The convergence of the growth of modernisation and the rise of communalism as a destructive force can be explained at two levels. Firstly, it is in these pockets of rapid economic growth that the positive roots of culture have been destroyed as part of the homogenising thrust of undermining cultural identities. Secondly, it is in these pockets that real or perceived shrinkage of social space has taken place. People perceive change, and assume that opportunities should have increased with modernisation. But such rapid change, guided by the market, not by human concerns, involves massive dislocation and displacement of people from traditional means of livelihood.

The new opportunities have a narrower social base. Thus, just as what is known as computer illiteracy in the West will be higher than the illiteracy in the three R's, the introduction of Western style education in non-Western societies has reduced access to learning instead of expanding it. The process of competition for scarce privileges and livelihoods aggravates the feeling of threat from the 'other' precisely while it undermines any positive identity of the self.

The culturally homogenising, socially fragmenting and atomising processes of modernisation, induced largely through State intervention, thus creates conditions of social and economic vulnerability and insecurity in which the State takes on the role of manager of those vulnerabilities and insecurities. In a period of apparent growth (benefiting a minority) but real shrinkage (which displace millions from their homes and livelihood), people compete for scarce resources and benefits, and to do this they must organise.

Ethnic groupings have been one way of bargaining with the State. When equality is a proclaimed social ideal, and inequality is the reality of what development and modernisation results in, each individual and group interprets its loss as someone else's

gain, and interprets the other's gain as a result of being well organised as a group – linguistic, religious, caste or regional.

Economic survival is preconceived by all as the issue – for example, the upper class medicos in Gujarat fighting the reservations of educational seats for the depressed castes and tribes, or the marginalised and poorer strata of the Hindus resenting the upward mobility of the Muslims or, in Malaysia, the Malays resenting the success of the Chinese. Because electoral politics and government interventions respond to ethnic groupings, these economic issues are transformed into issues of cultural survival. If 'they' get jobs, 'we' will be unemployed. If 'they' prosper, 'we' will be deprived. And this struggle for economic survival, which merges into a struggle for cultural survival, is experienced by all communities, not just the minorities, not just the marginalised.

In India, the Hindus see Muslims and backward classes being pampered for votes. The Muslims see Hindus as excluding them in new ways and see the State as encouraging such exclusion. The same is the case with the Sinhala and the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It is this overarching disease of cultural decay, of growing inequalities, of ethnicity as a negativised force ensuring gains and protection from new vulnerabilities, that accounts for communal violence as a symptom of social breakdown. This explains why communal violence is taking the form of an epidemic.

Diversity itself is not a cause for communal hatred. Different religions and linguistic groups have inhabited these lands for centuries, defining their self-identity in terms of their manifold diversities. What is new are the processes which have made cultural identity incompatible with diversity and have made cultural identity a means to economic gain or economic survival.

In this new complexity, when Hindus or Sinhala fight Muslims or Tamils, or upper castes fight backward classes, they do not fight them because their faith is in danger. The engineered violence of a '*rath yatra*' or other religious festivals does not explain how daily, in every house, conversations about communalism are conversations about who got jobs and who did not, who got economic privileges and who did not. It does not explain how the manipulators of public sentiments are finding ready ground to sow seeds of communal hatred. It does not explain why phenomena which used to be localised in space and time, now spread over large areas and last for weeks and months.

The role of the State

The role of the State in creating conditions of vulnerability and in then stepping in to manage these vulnerabilities has yet another offshoot. When each community or caste or religious group interprets its insecurity as a result of privileges of a competing group, gained through favours and patronage from the State, the resulting communal conflict and violence does not aim at fighting another community, but rather fighting

the State which is presumed to be dominated by or is preferential to the other community. The other community is perceived as a surrogate State.

What is narrowly seen as communal violence could thus, in a broader perspective, reflect deeper conflicts between a fragmented civil society and the State. Each community does not merely see the other as excluding the 'other', but further sees the other as an instrument of the State for excluding it in economic and political affairs. The State creates these vulnerabilities. Each time it steps in to create security, new insecurities are generated in people's minds, new fears that the State is biased against them — and for a contending faction or group.

The shrinkage of people's space, of the spaces for civil society, are the causes of the symptoms of communalism (as also of other maladies like terrorism and fundamentalism). Communal ideology allows the perception of this shrinkage not as a process which all communities are victims of, but as a process relative to the gains 'other' communities enjoy.

Divide and rule

Emergent communalism thus becomes a complex but effective expression of the divide and rule policy. 'Unity' takes on the perverted meaning of consolidating fragmentation whereas security takes on the perverted meaning of deepening insecurity. At each state and level of the breakdown of unity and security in civil society, the State intervenes in ways that accelerate the breakdown. Ethnicide engulfs larger and larger parts of our region. The annihilation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Sikhs in north India, the Muslims in Gujarat and Meerut, the Chakmas in Bangladesh, are just the beginnings.

Where will it all end? In the recovery of the conditions of diversity as the condition of survival for all, or in the annihilation of diversity and a consequent annihilation of all? That survival is only possible in diversity should be more than evident from the logic of self-destructiveness built into the destruction of diversity. It necessarily gives rise to concepts of separatism, exclusion and isolation.

Those Hindus and those Muslims who think that religious uniformity is a condition for peace need only remember the Karachi riots, where, in spite of a common religion and an Islamic State, the Mohajirs fight the Pathans and Punjabis. If we do not divide ourselves up by religion, we will do it by language, or by caste, or by race. Divisiveness and fragmentation is an infinite retrogression.

For every Hindu who thinks that the Indian Muslims should be sent to Pakistan, there is a Punjabi in Pakistan who thinks that the Mohajirs should be sent back to India. And for every Indian who thinks that the Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka should be sent back, there is a Sinhalese who thinks that all the Tamils should be asked to go to India. We seem to be trapped in our cultural diversities.

Social breakdown

This outbreak of negative identities is proceeding at a pace that heralds not just a fast growing erosion of State authority, but something even more basic – social breakdown. The deeper social conflicts that the State had ‘successfully’ mediated for so long appear to burst forth unmediated and unchecked, whereas elements that are supposed to be part of the State structure are themselves found to join the fray and engage in reckless manoeuvres. Each time this has happened, the poorer classes of all communities have borne the brunt of the resulting ‘breakdown’ of the law.

The result is an upsurge of communal violence in which all kinds of unscrupulous elements are found to get busy and engage in the most gruesome acts – while the bearers of State power are found to stand by and allow the marauding mobs and hoodlums, professional and otherwise, to take over. The government of the day, already rendered impotent by personal insecurities and squabbles at the higher echelons, collapses and hands over charge to the police, paramilitary forces and the army who have no understanding of the real issues underlying the latest breakdown and treat them all in the same way.

Everywhere it is the same: imposing curfews, rounding up hundreds of people, most of them innocent, issuing orders to shoot on sight, engaging in flag marches and letting the lower constabulary fire the gun at the slightest provocation, in the process killing a lot of innocent people and deepening the sense of hurt and ill-feeling among the affected segments of the public, and thus making it impossible to mend matters in a normal way.

Worse still, there is reason to believe that at least a fair chunk, if not too many, of those who have been entrusted the task of imposing order on a situation seething with violence, arson, loot and rape, are themselves found to exploit the situation. And one notices that the higher-ups in the system, from cabinet ministers to senior civil servants to commissioners of police, have little control over the local power structure consisting of mafia politicians, professional gangsters, pedlars in liquor and drugs and what can be called lumpen policemen.

Violence takes charge

What one notices is a growing combination of two rather serious trends, both of which point to an incipient breakdown of the State – a collapse of political authority at the lower levels of society consequent upon its increasing centralisation and tendency to look outward, and the filling in of the consequent vacuum created by a new genre of politics that combines communal crimes, fundamentalist slogans and pure terrorism that is not any longer extremist in any ideological sense, but simply aimed to kill, maim, rape and loot.

Violence becomes an end in itself, a source of profit and livelihood, a new profession that is not bound by any external rules. As this happens, the police too

become helpless, can shoot and round up, but have no clear sense of who is being shot or rounded up and, as the risks of engagement grow, they both give up and give in. They give in not to those with a better grip on the situation, but with greater fire power than themselves — to battalions from outside the region, to the army and, in the meanwhile, to those wielding guns and knives and various new devices of setting fire to individuals and homes and shops, a whole new technology of terror.

Thus in Meerut in north India (a scene of continuous communal skirmishes), the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), which itself engaged in heinous acts of atrocities against innocent people, when asked to comb the place for arms, asked for army protection. It is this combination of terror on others and fear for themselves that is becoming a prominent feature of police behaviour in strife-ridden situations.

Lumpenisation

No wonder, the people turn increasingly to the local lumpen who may themselves be engaging in terror, but who happen to be also the only source of protection of a slum or a resettlement colony. Ultimately, when a semblance of peace returns, it is not because of the claims made by the police or district administration, but because of a temporary truce between rival bands of lumpen belonging to rival factions of the ruling party's underworld.

The situation has become so serious that a senior civil liberties activist in India (who has spent most of his life working in the slums and among poor and migrant labourers in Delhi) told me recently, after spending several days in the walled city of Delhi during a serious outbreak of communal violence, that we should engage in a dialogue with the lumpen, listen to their complaints against the police and the Congress Party politicians and win them over for restoring peace and tranquillity. They may in fact be better placed in restoring order than the police and the administration, who can be dictated to by mafia politicians before whom they feel powerless.

Whether one agrees with this view or not, what is becoming clear is that the more the agents of the State and party leaders withdraw from the scenes of carnage and rioting, the more the writ of the lumpen and the bullies is going to run at large. This is particularly becoming the case in what is known as the 'old city' in all metropolitan areas. These are all walled cities, with fortress-like structures, from behind which both the lay citizenry and their 'protectors' operate, in which the police may patrol, but dread to move around except at the sufferance of the new mafia-style bosses (the old-style party bosses have disappeared long ago), and where, in almost all cases of increased tension and violence, the army has to be called in to restore order temporarily. Here long-term accords can only be as a result of deals among the rival strongmen of the area.

What is emerging is the almost total autonomy of an anarchistic power structure, consisting of wholly local figures who owe no loyalty to anyone higher up and who for their own reasons have come to the conclusion that the government, the party and the

like cannot be relied upon any more to provide either justice or peace and they must fall back upon their own resources – organisational, financial and lethal.

Terrorism

Unfortunately such a picture of who wields power in densely populated and communally mixed areas is too static. It does not bring out the true character of the malady afflicting the cities and their rural peripheries. It only provides the anatomy of power in these areas, not the emergent physiology and chemistry of terror that is found to accompany each successive episode of communal violence.

To understand that, one has to bring in two additional factors – the growth of terrorism and the increasing appeal of fundamentalist and chauvinist slogans. Terrorism is raising its head among both, those (the Sinhala in Sri Lanka and the Hindus in India) who claim to be a majority wronged by public policy, and the minorities (like the Tamils or the Muslims and the Sikhs).

Because of the rapid decline in the authority of secular power, the deteriorating state of the law-and-order machinery to which the leaders of government and political parties have entrusted the job of maintaining peace, and the spurt of communal feelings in the middle and lower middle classes which is exploited by politicians for narrow gains, there has been a mushroom growth of those who specialise in terror.

It is a situation of an ideological vacuum accompanied by a rise of a 'pragmatic' younger generation that is no longer driven by dreams of the future, but by concern with the here and now. Under pressure of declining economic opportunities and the growing appeal of safeguarding communal and caste interests, pragmatism takes on more and more banal forms. The result is terrorism. Hence the growth of not just lumpen elements – which is an old story – but of terrorist squads patrolling these areas.

A large part of the rising spectre of terrorism – on the part of the agents of the State engaging in reckless shooting, and of mafia politicians, and on the part of armed gangs of a communal type – is amoral and non-ideological. It is carried out as a vocation, for sheer profit. But what makes it truly venomous and deadly is its tie-up with fundamentalist and chauvinist organisations and leaders. The ideological vacuum of a socio-economic and party-political kind is being increasingly filled in by doctrines and slogans based on sheer hatred of this or that community.

Alienation

There is taking place an increasing alienation of diverse local communities from the State which is in some respects a more far-reaching development than even the growth of violence and terrorism, which of course thrive on such alienation. For it signals the coming breakdown of civil society in the absence of determined effort on

the part of coming breakdown of civil society in the absence of determined effort on the part of all concerned to prevent it. It is part of a much larger phenomenon. This is the slow but growing withdrawal of the ordinary citizen from the constitutional apparatus called the State, as well as from the larger organic entity enveloping all smaller affiliations and identities called the nation.

Whoever one talks to in the general public gives the feeling of increasing indifference, apathy and alienation from, if not antipathy and rejection of, the State. There is an equal, if not greater, withdrawal from nationalist commitment. With a few exceptions all the talk of threats from abroad seems to make no dent on the general public. Similarly, while people do get upset and even disgusted at the hoary tales of terrorist killings, this does not make them feel any closer to the government or any of the other organs of the State – with which in fact many of them feel equally disgusted.

The awe and respect for the army has also precipitously declined in these countries. What has grown instead is one's identity with one's own caste or linguistic or religious community and often a withdrawal into still narrower shells of primary and secondary loyalties – of peer groups and family – and often into one's own lonely and miserable self. It is a frightening situation and accounts for growing rates of both, self and other directed violence.

Communalism thrives in this larger canvas of societal breakdown: Of destruction and decay of institutions; of erosion of legitimate authority; of the decline of civil society; and of the collapse of the democratic State that had for so long given cohesion to civil society without undermining its diversity and plurality.

Defence of privilege

Having laid out this emerging scenario of negativist, exclusivist and insecure forms of ethnicity and communalism, there is need to return to a point made earlier which bears repetition because in it may also lie the clues to future intervention. While the poison of communalism spreads under the pressure of widely felt insecurities and the power of chauvinist and fundamentalist doctrines, it is the doing of a small minority in all communities. Thus, in so-called majority communities what has taken place is a small minority's interpretation of a dominant or hegemonical culture that is proclaimed to be so and backed by the demand that the State should accept it as such and the minorities should be forced to accede to that formulation.

With this, majoritarianism is forced on the State, which is asked to confer a special and privileged status on those belonging to it and a secondary or inferior status on others. In point of fact, of course, such privileges get conferred on a small minority of people, who in any case happen to be privileged and have access to the resources and opportunities provided by a modernising State and a corporate capitalist economy.

Predictably, the reaction this produces in the minority communities also plays into the hands of small, privileged groups. Thus, in the State of Kerala in India, long known for amicable togetherness among diverse communities of Hindus, Muslims and

Christians (each found to be proportionally large and each encompassing a diverse spectrum of communities), the communal virus has been spreading and affecting each of these, thanks largely to the political compulsion of narrowly conceived electoral calculations.

The result is Hindu communalism exploited by the privileged among the dominant castes, Muslim communalism exploited by the rich and privileged strata known as the 'timber mafia' that has benefited from Gulf money (against which in fact the Hindu communalists are directing their ire), and Christian communalism in which the Catholic clergy with massive Church and other institutional resources is found to play a major role. Recently, when the two Communist parties (and their allies) took a principled stand and refused to have any truck with the communal parties (e.g., the two factions of the Muslim League with one of which they were once in alliance), it was found that while the mass of the people responded positively to it, the communalists among the Hindus also chose to support it as against the Congress-led alliance which had included the Muslim parties. As Justice Krishna Iyer, a leading independent figure in the Kerala left commented, "Secularism has now become the haven of Hindu communalists."

Privilege and violence

The point at issue, of course, is that whether it is the communalism of the electoral variety or the communalism of street violence, it is always a small minority of highly placed and politically influential people that are found to see in communalism an instrument of perpetuating their power and privilege. As socio-economic issues get sidetracked by an elite that is unwilling to face mass pressures for justice and equity, and as communalism appears to be the most handy instrument for this, there takes place a marriage between privilege, violence and corruption.

Defence of achieved standards of living and accumulated wealth and privilege is everywhere taking recourse to instruments of violence. In the international arena it takes the form of defence of ostentatious living standards, packaged as the 'American way of life', by recourse to strategic doctrines directed against the Third World. In the domestic arena it is defence of the same living standards of the rich, packaged as preservation of 'merit' and 'quality' in the social and economic sphere and of 'national security' in the political sphere, put forward by and large by the same social groups (with the richer and privileged strata from the minorities co-opted into the power structure).

Wages of secularism

What is important to gauge here is perhaps the most crucial theoretical point in our understanding of the exclusivist and divisive conception of communalism. It is that there is far more of a secular than a religious basis to it. It is more a struggle for survival

and retention of secular (political and economic) power and control over secular vantage points (in the State and in the economy), than for religious values or even religious advantage or ascendance.

True, religious values and symbols are utilised in this process but they are addressed more to goals of power than of piety. The more the use of fundamentalist and chauvinist symbols in the desperation for preserving or denying secular spaces, the more the areas of religiosity, mysticism and spiritual transcendence are found to recede. This is the most important paradox of 'religious revivalism' in societies striving to become secular.

Many factors have contributed to this situation over a period of time. There has taken place everywhere an erosion of major institutions in which the people could participate at local levels and centralisation of power in a narrow coterie, alongside a wilful discrediting of politics as such. With this, the regard for diversity and the mediating role of politics has weakened.

The replacement of political managers by just managers has produced far greater centralisation than ever before and a considerable decline in the capacity to engage the nation's diversities into a common framework. Meanwhile, the accent on modernisation has emphasised values of efficiency and 'merit' which has alienated the upper classes from those lower down.

Hence the growing demand for undoing special entitlements provided to the latter in the form of reservations and the like. To the upswing of communal passions across religious divides has been added new communal divides across castes and ethnic divisions. With this the very concept of secularism has undergone a dramatic shift from a conception based on respect for all diversities to one based on State power and technology, straddling social diversity and imposing a homogenising ethos on it.

'Revivalism'

It is against this basic change of ethos in the political sphere that one has to understand the role of religious revivalism and so-called fundamentalism which are usually held responsible for the upsurge in communal violence in recent times. In point of fact there is nothing religious in the revival of religious symbols and appeals, and there is nothing fundamental that those who are called fundamentalists, are raising. These are not even truly pious people. Not even the so-called *sadhus* and *maulvis* and *bhikkus*. They are people determined to exploit the institutional vacuum that is at large and move into it with both lethal ideas and lethal weapons.

But it is not these individuals and organisations that have created the situation we face; it is the situation that was created for them by the leadership that is mainly responsible for their heightened role in the current scene. In fact, the goings on of these people are an indirect tribute to the larger ethos created by the new secular elite – of homogenising diversity, imposing a synthetic culture through modern

communications and creating an increasingly tightly-knit elite that will, they believe, produce a strong and powerful India.

The appeal of the new religions — both of the majority and of the minorities — is based on doing to religion what the national elite is doing to secular affairs. The fundamental feature of any religion is individual piety and regard for different ways in which piety is achieved. What the new religions are trying to do is to homogenise the religious impulse, first by basing it on deep anxiety and insecurity of the 'other' and, second, by marketing it (like marketing any other ware).

Look at what is happening to religious festivals. Each of these is turning into not a sacred but a secular affair, taken out of the immense diversity of family and community ceremonies in which they used to be observed and wholly divorced from deeper religious beliefs. With this, religion is made into a marketplace, propagated through blaring loudspeakers often going on for days and even weeks. Strong-armed men, and sometimes women, are found spearheading *yatras*, *julus* and *raths* that are meant to create trouble.

The so-called 'revivalism' of religion is thus wholly rootless, appropriating cultural symbols and metaphors that can be invoked in a period of growing insecurity all round. With this goes the whole space that was preserved for the sacred and the revered and the mythical. Instead it becomes a take-religion-to-the streets affair. When this happens, it is sheer madness. The police and even the army remain tame spectators before these marauding mobs.

It is in the context of this perversion of both secular and religious space that the substitution of democratic by communal politics and the decline in respect for diversity have to be understood. Where politics itself gets discredited there can be no respect for diversity. Moreover, where the affairs of the State are handed over to a managerial elite, the accent will be on homogenisation, not on diversity, on order, not on consensus, on repression, not on accommodation. And this then creates a climate in which chauvinist forces and a threatened upper-class combine to mount a backlash against the poor and the deprived, clothed in terms of religious appeals.

With this, what used to be the doings of communal gangs and hired professionals — as happened in the 1983 massacre in Colombo or the November 1984 carnage in Delhi — spreads downwards and poisons the psyche of entire communities. This is yet to happen in full measure, but the process has begun. As it spreads, religion becomes the main playground for diverse secular forces, provides easy escape routes to an elite that is facing growing pressures of an economic or political kind, and prepares the way for imposing a centralised and authoritarian regime in the name of restoring order and unity.

Chauvinism

It is this growing convergence between a secular and technocratic vision of the State and the search for a chauvinist ideology that provides the new setting of

communalism and of the more exclusivist and negative thrust of ethnicity. It is a thrust that is drawing its inspiration from wholly new and unsuspected sources; from the State which is supposed to be secular; from the modernist national elite that is supposed to provide correctives to parochial tendencies; from the security establishment which is supposed to provide protection to all communities; from the educated middle class which is supposed to be committed to democratic values. From the science and technology elite which is supposed to breathe a 'scientific temper'; from the votaries of 'high culture' who are supposed to be the custodians of humanism, compassion and catholicity.

The negativist thrust is drawing on new insecurities and vulnerabilities of the owning classes and privileged social strata, the upper and middle classes being found to be far more communal than the poorer and lower classes. The higher one goes, the more the appeal of chauvinist tendencies. Thus, one finds that among the professionals engaged in scientific and technological establishments there is widespread frustration and disenchantment arising out of a highly competitive and hierarchical organisational milieu, inducing cynicism on the one hand and social conservatism on the other.

Meanwhile, the accent on a technocratic and futurist perspective looks down on the inevitable pluralities and bargaining culture of democratic politics and its universalist credo undermines respect for diversity. The combined result of such insecurities and the ascendant norms of high tech is a highly distorted perception of nationalism and national interest. It is a new and peculiar model of ethnicity that is induced by modernity (as against ethnicity that is a reaction to the excesses of modernity) – chauvinist, defensive, reckless, steamrolling and straitjacketing all that comes in the way; in the end, ruthless and fascist.

End of politics

Underlying this new convergence of technocratic and chauvinist tendencies has been a basic turnaround in national priorities; from the primacy of the socio-political dimension to the primacy of the communal and chauvinist dimension, leading to a gross neglect of issues, of growing disparities, deprivation, discrimination and destitution. This is accompanied by another turnabout which is in some respects even more basic: from a system that was based on the centrality of the political process to one that denigrates the values of politics and seeks to replace it by a reign of experts and technocrats, and through them of the corporate sector, the import sector and the multinationals.

The latter have always insisted that the State was too politicised, too open, too tolerant of the rights of trade unions and slumdwellers and tribals and other presumed roadblocks to progress that can only be achieved through large scale investments in modern technology, telecommunications, agribusiness and the rest. There was need to clean it all up and prepare the way for catching up with the 'advanced' nations.

In this thinking, the very understanding of social change has been turned around: from one in which democratic politics provides the motive force, to one in which technology provides the great spur to national power, greatness and unity. The only element of politics that was necessary for this was the continuation of the same regime in power through any means and if for this the religious and ethnic minorities, the national peripheries and various kinds of popular movements have to be fixed or bought over, this should of course be done.

This new convergence of a technocratic model of the State and a communal model of the nation has been the striking feature of the last few years. Normally, one thinks of technocrats and managers as being modern, secular and all that. This is an illusion. As they have no politics, they have no real stake — except profit and power. An apolitical approach, lacking as it is in an overarching frame of values, necessarily ends up being amoral.

I have dealt elsewhere with the implications of the dominion of the technocratic over the political in the new alignment of forces. Here, I want to deal mainly with the more basic turnabout mentioned above — from the socio-political to the communal. Whereas all kinds of projects continue to be inaugurated, new plans and policies keep getting announced, and both the electronic media and advertising agencies, as well as new modules of mass persuasion keep stressing 'development', the fact of the matter is that so far as the State is concerned, none of this is of any consequence.

More and more attention is given to the communal dimension — both by the rulers and all the others who influence affairs: the political parties, the press, the judiciary, the caucus of advisors and the few journalists and publicists that may have access to power and decision-making.

Increasingly, the people too — except, of course, for the really poor and underprivileged — seem to be drawn more and more to thinking of society in essentially communal terms, or in terms of the perennial anxiety about threats to national unity from extremists, terrorists, etc. This also gives precedence to the communal angle over pressing socio-economic problems like growing unemployment and marginalisation of vast sections of the people, or even over such urgent matters as increasing incidence of droughts and ecological problems. It thus gets precedence over important political problems that account for so much discontent and instability in the system — federal relations, electoral reforms, reform of the police and the law and order apparatus at the grassroots of society, autonomy for the media following the massive diffusion of modern communications, etc. Each of these issues — economic and political — received a great deal of public attention in the years gone by, even if the government of the day failed to measure up to expectations. Today, they all seem to have receded into the background.

Rise of technocracy

They have receded into the background because of the displacement of a model of politics that was addressed to the people, to one that is addressed to the upper strata of society, to the elite. Few people realised that inherent in this withdrawal from a populist to a managerial style of conducting national affairs was a turnabout from secular to communal politics. Many thought that things like liberalisation of the economy, greater opening up to private foreign investment and the International Monetary Fund/World Bank constellation, and getting rid of elderly party stalwarts committed to slow processes of politics and replacing them by a younger lot, heralded a new pragmatic and dynamic phase.

Little did they realise that in this process of depoliticisation was inherent a shift which would soon produce a yawning vacuum that would then be filled by all manner of adventurers, both dilettantish and devilish, and provide a playground for unending conflicts and violence, feeding on pent-up frustrations and paranoid tendencies.

It is in this spectrum of events, spurred as well as superimposed by a leadership that had lost confidence in its own earlier secular and socialist credo, that the turnaround towards communalism of the State is to be found. It has involved major inroads into the framework of distributive justice, opened up the economy – and the ecology – to efforts to privatise all resources and initiatives.

By providing greater play to vested interests and to new power brokers at the grassroots and intermediate levels, it has further opened the field to local mafias and professionals in violence – at the cost of the poor in all communities. Ill-equipped to perceive the nature of the deteriorating social scene and disdainful of 'politics', the new elite seem to have decided to turn their back on the masses and pin all faith in the new emerging ideology the world over – technological modernisation. This necessarily involves focusing on the advance guard of society that is available for such transformation, leaving the rear guard to their fate, in effect dispossessing them and if need be, dispensing with them.

It is not as if this is some kind of a master plan. It is rather that a managerial mind tends to treat issues of power and authority with misplaced confidence, verging on arrogance and aggressiveness. It encourages hawkish tendencies and feels good at being smart and decisive, instead of negotiating one's way through various parameters and levels.

Forced ethnicity

The impact of such thinking has been the most severe for the truly ethnic communities living in the hinterlands of these societies. These are increasingly being forced to cave in and think in terms of mere retention of the extremely limited opportunities that the system offers and are prevented from joining larger movements for social justice and transformation.

For the tribal people and the inhabitants of forest ranges, capitalism and colonial style exploitation (made presentable as development projects) have eroded their resource base, forced them to move out of their traditional homelands and threatened their cultural identity and economic stability and self-reliance. The political system is increasingly treating them either in law and order terms or as ethnics and aliens with whom some kind of territorial arrangements must be worked out. Financial allurements are offered in return for their suspending their demands for greater autonomy and managing their own affairs according to their own traditions and lifestyle. This is forcing the tribals and the forest people to think of their genuine aspirations along narrow communal and sectarian lines, which make them run to the Centre for 'concessions'. And the more they accept being treated in this manner, the more they open themselves up to metropolitan and international pressures for economic exploitation and the mining away of their rich natural resources. The greater the communal orientation, the less their capacity for self-conservation and sustained livelihood.

To come back to the main point of this essay, the shift in attention of the State from basic economic and political tasks to communal and ethnic issues, as well as the growing tendency towards taking major sources of conflict and confrontation out of the political arena, are forcing one segment after another of these plural societies to fall back on their primordial resources and think of their struggle for survival along essentially communal lines.

In order to comprehend this more fully, there is need to conceptually clarify the contradictions inherent in both the 'modern project', epitomised in recent decades as development with its institutional location in the modern nation-state, and to see how in the process of clarifying and facing up to these contradictions, ethnicity can be made into a positive and liberating, rather than a negativist and excluding process.

Development and ethnicity

A common assumption of 'developmentalism' as a modernising project and ideology has been that ethnicity is destined to wither away as an anachronism, to give way to a totally secular social order where particularism of colour, creed, and language will not impede full social participation. This assumption of a post-ethnic consciousness in the developmental paradigm sees ethnic distinctions as losing force either to a working class consciousness (as in Marxism), or to an emphasis on 'nation-building' as a norm in which the State and the market come to replace older ethnic identities (as in bourgeois liberalism).

Yet, history does not seem to be following this developmental path to secular identities. The more rapid the development of a region, the more modernised its infrastructure, the ethnic identities seem to deepen, and ethnic conflicts seem to intensify. The usual explanation for ethnic conflicts is to assume that difference breeds conflict, and to go into the history of regions, linguistic and regional clashes and

communal tensions in the past. Thus, scholars in Sri Lanka study Tamil–Sinhala differences, and scholars in India study Hindu–Muslim or Hindu–Sikh tensions as carryovers from the past.

But these histories do not provide any explanation for the paradoxical deepening of ethnic identity and conflict with the acceleration of the process of modernisation. The issue of ethnicity is more complex than the developmental view suggests. On the contrary, ethnicity becomes a ground for reassessing the cultural, economic and political impacts of developmentalism. These related and complex impacts are found to create new vulnerabilities and new responses which feed into the rise of ethnic consciousness and new ethnic assertions. Instead of disappearing, ethnic identities harden as a combination/convergence of three trends.

Developmentalism, as culture, creates a uniform spread of commercial values and conspicuous consumption based on Western lifestyles and, in particular, on the hegemony of the market. There is an implied ‘universality’ in this culture, which is assumed to work for all societies. We have already examined this particular model of universality as opposed to the universalism of earlier more philosophical systems of thought.

Here we want to simply say that, unlike other models of universality in past civilisations, this particular model is so arrogant and ethnocentric that it has no built-in mechanism of self-correction. Ethnicity and recovery of ethnic spaces become the only correctives. Diverse communities respond to this ‘universal’ culture of developmentalism (and the market) by turning to their religions and cultures as a corrective source of values. Thus, Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka was a response to cultural destruction in Sri Lanka during colonialism. As Dharmapala wrote in 1902:

“This ancient, historic, refined people, under the diabolism of vicious paganism, introduced by the British administrators are now declining and slowly dying away. The bureaucratic administrators... have cut down primeval forests to plant tea; have introduced opium, *ganja*, whisky, *arrak* and other alcoholic poisons, have opened saloons and drinking taverns in every village; have killed all industries and made the people indolent.”

Post-independence ethnic consciousness has similarly been fuelled by a response to the culture of development. The Punjab conflicts too have, at one level, a genuine cultural upsurge as a corrective to the commercial cultural spread by the green revolution. This spread of capitalist agriculture created new inequalities, disrupted community ties, dislocated old forms of life and fractured the moral and ethical fabric that had provided social norms. Alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction spread as more money circulated in the villages. Religious revivalism came as a moral corrective to these trends.

In the early phase, when Bhindranwale preached from this ground, his most ardent followers were women and children, because they suffered most with a drunken or drug addicted father, brother or husband in the family. During this phase, Bhindranwale made no anti-Hindu statements. He was popular because he was seen as transforming society into a 'good' society. Even today, rural people in Punjab remember him only in his capacity as a preacher and a social religious reformer.

'Revivalism' is thus often a corrective response to the force of modernisation and development. That in Sri Lanka it turned into Sinhala chauvinism and, in Punjab, Bhindranwale later became the inspiration for terrorist violence, is part of the complexity of ethnicity. This ambivalent nature of ethnic and cultural upsurges can make us more alert to the complex, but real ways in which the modernist world and modernist consciousness are falling apart. We need to recognise these ambivalences and ambiguities, and learn how to cherish beneficial tendencies towards diversity, while struggling against the conditions which create the possibility of these diverse stirrings themselves becoming homogenising, violent and excluding.

The hegemonous theories of the homogenous culture of the market as created by development assume the destruction of other cultures which can provide human values outside the market. In the recreation of a metalevel ethical order which is a source of lasting human values, of first principles of human conduct, earlier systems of culture are being revived because these values cannot come from the market and its narrow economic ends of profits, consumerism and commoditisation.

The recovery of diverse positive identities as diverse yet ethical approaches to the 'good' life, cannot thus be simply interpreted as the growth of negativised identities, though given the tendencies of the elite to communalise politics and society in that negative sense the danger of these positive resurgences being transformed into exclusivist and even annihilatory usages always exists.

For instance, the concept of '*Ram Rajya*' has been a non-hegemonical democratic concept in India — and we used to have the refined sensitivity to distinguish that concept from the crude communal fight over *Ram Janma Bhoomi*. If development itself has become a problem, and has sowed the seeds of discontent and ethnic conflict, a corrective to development can only come from other worldviews, other visions. The recovery of these subjugated others becomes a difficult, touchy, yet essential task. There are inherent dangers in such a recovery, but also opportunities which we cannot afford to miss.

Developmentalism, as economism, has become a source of new economic vulnerabilities, and new inequalities. In multi-ethnic societies, where overlap has existed between religious and regional identities and economic functions, issues of economic insecurity and class contradictions are very conveniently transformed by the elite into issues of ethnic, caste and religious issues.

The best illustration of how easy it is to see an ethnic factor in primarily economic and class issues are the Deccan riots that took place in 1875 in Ahmednagar and Poona districts, which had been brought under large scale cotton cultivation to provide raw

material to the British textile industry during the cotton famine caused by the American civil war.

Cash crop cultivation as part of colonial policy drew moneylenders from Gujarat and Mewar to the Deccan, and new land tenure arrangements meant to suit high and uniform revenue generation eroded the security of land ownership of the peasant and transferred ownership through debts to the small class of moneylenders. The moneylender, traditionally a part of the *jajmani* system of village interdependence, now became a powerful investor in the colonial policy of commercialisation of land and land use.

When the American civil war ended, and cotton supplies from America were resumed, the prices of cotton fell in the Deccan, and peasants were instantly indebted and dispossessed of these lands. Their lands and houses passed into the hands of moneylenders. Enraged, the peasants of Poona and Ahmednagar attacked the moneylenders to recover these lands. For the peasant, the reality of exploitation was experienced through the moneylenders. An outcome of economic vulnerabilities, induced by global integration, thus became a local economic conflict between peasants and moneylenders, and since the peasants were Maratha and moneylenders were Gujarati and Marwari, the conflict also developed an ethnic colour.

The recent communalisation of the Punjab problem seems to have a similar basis. The green revolution, a development strategy for linking Third World agriculture into the global markets of fertilisers, pesticides and seeds, has generated severe economic vulnerabilities for both small and rich farmers in Punjab. The farming community in Punjab also happens to be Jat Sikh, and economic tension between the Centre (Delhi) and Punjab farmers, and farmers and traders have been easily ethnicised, first by the Centre, and later by the people of Punjab.

In May 1984, the farmers' agitation was at its height in Punjab. For a week, farmers '*gheraoed*' the Punjab Raj Bhawan — from 10 to 18 May. By conservative estimates at any time more than 15,000–20,000 farmers were present in Chandigarh during the *gherao*. Earlier, from 1–7 May, the farmers had decided to boycott the grain markets to register protest against the Central government procurement policy. On 23 May 1984, Harchand Singh Longowal, the Akali Dal president, announced that the next phase of the agitation would include attempts to stop the sale of food grain to the Food Corporation of India.

Since Punjab provides the bulk of the reserve of grain, which is used to sustain the government distribution system and thus keep prices down, a successful grain blockade implied a serious national crisis and would have given Punjab a powerful bargaining tool for its demands for greater State autonomy. On 3 June, Mrs. Gandhi called out the army in Punjab and on 5 June, the Golden Temple was attacked, which was for the Sikhs an attack on the Sikh faith and Sikh dignity and honour. After Operation Bluestar, the Sikhs as a farming community was forgotten; only Sikhs as a religious community remain in national consciousness. Nothing after that could be read without the communal stamp on it. We quote from the Sikh extremists resolution at the April

1986 Sarbat Khalsa “defeat the communal Brahmin–Bania combine that controls the Delhi Darbar. This is the only way of establishing hegemony of Sikhism in this country. In this way, under the hegemony of Sikh worldview and politics, a militant organisation of the workers, the poor, the backward people and the minorities (Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Dalits, etc.,) has to be established.”

What began as economic demands and a recovery of ethical order, was thus transformed in Punjab into a war between two hegemonic tendencies — one of the State, the other of the extremists. What began as a recovery for diversity, a search for economic security and cultural identity, has been forced to turn into ethnic chauvinism, embroiling ever larger numbers, ever larger regions into violence.

The third tendency by which development ethnicises and communalises conflicts is the role of the electoral politics in dividing up the development cake. Since ethnic groups have a collective nature that is valued by political parties interested in group support, ethnicity is made a pawn in electoral politics. Since development has in general taken decision-making away from local communities into State and national capitals, communities became willing pawns as part of their survival strategy in the context of centralisation of power that accompanies the development process.

The distancing of decisions from the people, the role of representational politics in offering a premise to cover that distance, and the need to turn that premise into delivery of votes, combine together to fragment society and divide it along the boundaries of new and emergent identities.

With this, the notion of the party as an instrument of mass transformation gives place to one of the party as a mechanical contrivance which keeps you in power. Once this happens, the idea of pluralism in democracy gets perverted into communalism by emphasizing the numerical power of majorities versus minorities. In this sense, those who argue that communalism is a direct child of secular politics, are right. It is secular politics reduced of all normative content (which is how secularism is often conceived).

Elections become ends in themselves, instruments of the *status quo* and of self-perpetuation rather than of change. In a number of Third World countries elections do take place, but they take place essentially for perpetuating whosoever happens to be in power. In a sense this has also happened in the West, above all in the US and the UK. In all these countries, elections have become a legitimising process for highly authoritarian politics. And in all of them what you are really getting, without always noticing it, is the substitution of a political process based on competition for programmes and policies, and a debate on those policies, by a mere numbers game.

Of course, the communal implications of the numbers game in a plural society are not immediately apparent. One still thinks of numbers in terms of caste, regions and so forth. And yet if you examine the matter carefully, the numbers game does seem to have given rise to an ethnic calculus and ultimately to communal politics. When you go to the constituency level, and you want to basically play this game, then everybody begins to say, ‘if you want to win in this constituency you must solicit the support of this caste or community’. This is almost inevitable. Once competition based on issues of

ideological consideration is eschewed, the numbers game essentially becomes an ethnic game.

Such an ethnic orientation of the numbers game has two prominent features. One is the rise of new political organisations that are sometimes blatantly and sometimes not so blatantly communal. This happens at the local level or starts at that level and then moves up. In India, the Shiv Sena is a good example of this. Secondly, there takes place a capture of specifically political organisations like parties by cultural and sectarian organisations.

What started as non-political organisations take on a political role. Such organisations declare that they have nothing to do with politics, but they keep spreading their tentacles. In the course of time political organisations like parties and trade unions and professional associations, like those of students and teachers, become increasingly dependent on sectarian and communal organisations which are not supposed to be political.

This kind of ethnic-based, communal organisation-based politics has far-reaching consequences. For it begins to affect the hitherto unaffected areas, e.g., the working class, the students, the youth generally. We know from the reports of various communal riots that a lot of participants in these riots tend to be rather young, people who have had no experience of earlier divides, e.g., the partition of India in 1947, and of the kind of prejudices or hurt feelings that their parents nursed. It is participation that is largely apolitical. And it spreads in both time and space. These riots go on for weeks and sometimes for months, they recur after having stopped and they stop only to regroup and start again. Unlike in earlier times they begin to permeate the rural areas. They affect the press and the larger climate of opinion. And they affect the law and order establishments — the police and the para-military forces.

As all this happens, the State itself gets ready to co-opt the ethnic upsurge and forces the latter into new polarities and hostilities which it makes full use of. What started as a challenge to the State and its modernist project is absorbed by it, and the promise of its creative and regenerative potential is destroyed.

Ethnicity as a movement

This is a good point to return to where we started, *viz.*, a consideration of the ambivalent nature of the concept of ethnicity, in particular under conditions where both the modern nation-state and its project of development are ceasing to provide a framework for social transformation and instead are being used by narrow interests to distort designs. Three different strains can be identified in the evolution of ethnicity as both a political and an intellectual movement.

There is, first, the more genuine assertion of human diversity against the homogenising thrust of the modern State, modern capitalism and modern technology — together conceptualised earlier in this chapter as the 'modern project'. This takes

the form both of countering recent tendencies and of recovering lost spaces before their powerful onslaughts, as well as freshly conceiving human arrangements and their cultural, ecological and gender underpinnings.

There is, second, the opposite tendency among the opponents of the modern project, of a monotheistic, militarist and messianic type. This is found, for instance, in the effort of Ayatollah Khomeini and his Iranian Revolution to glorify the Shiite version of Islam and, with it, of both the Iranian State and the *Imam* himself. Or in Pakistan's version of the Islamic State and the effort to endow religious significance to hegemonical concepts of a secular variety emanating from Saudi Arabia and some other Gulf countries — such as the Islamic bomb, the Islamic Summit and the Islamic mission of world conquest. But it is also found in a number of other seemingly religious projects of a hegemonical and militarist kind that are in reality essentially secular and statist — in the dominant conceptions of Hindu militants, Sinhala nationalists and the *Bumiputra* Malays.

There is, third, an even more clearly secular distortion and exploitation of ethnic and communal identities by governments, dominant political parties and ascendant new formations of a party kind that are out to capture or retain State power by moving away from socio-economic and political issues and focusing public attention and emotions on communal claims and counter-claims, fomenting a scenario of conflict and violence and thinking of both the collective 'self' and the collective 'other' in exclusivist and antagonistic terms.

The crucial test of ethnicity as a civilisational process, as providing a creative basis for organising civil society and bringing into its arena the real stirrings of the human spirit, lies in affirming the vision underlying the first of these tendencies at the exclusion of the other two.

There is a further test. So far this more enduring and ennobling, as well as more imaginative and historically more significant tendency, has been limited to micro spaces — often quite large, but still micro and local and limited. How does one expand these towards more macro crystallisations? How does one at least reverberate the present macro structures with their perspective and experiences in alternative institution-building? How, above all, to inform prevailing States and the State system with their agendas of preserving diversities, sustaining life support systems and building complementaries, mutual nurturance and holistic vision?

The future of ethnicity as an effort at reconstructing the human endeavour towards both a more just and a more humane order will depend on meeting these two crucial tests.

The restructuring of civil society

Ethnicity, when negativised, is at the root of much of the contemporary social violence which in extreme cases turns into ethnicide. But ethnicity as a creative and regenerative force is also the opening to a humane future. As a response to the universalising and

atomising view of nature and society that the project of modernisation is based on, ethnicity opens new spaces, in thought and in practice, for diversity and community as a basis for organisation.

In one way or another, the insecurities that underlie the many dimensions of ethnic conflict arise from the breakdown of the social order and of community. The State, the market, the development process, are all instruments for reducing identities to isolated 'selves' in competition with others. The individual is made the centre of social space. There is no conception of the collective as a whole, except as a collection of individuals.

The erosion of security that this collapse of community leads to is now being expressed in negativised, other-annihilating forms, but sometimes also expressed as sources of both, recovery of a lost sense of community and assertion of new and revitalised forms, in which the individual's position and dignity in social space is defined by a creative intervention in community affairs.

The regeneration of community, not as a collection of isolated individuals, but as interactive structures both internally and *vis-a-vis* each other, can become an important source of transformation by becoming the basis of collective reconstruction of the 'whole'. It can become the source of alternative people's security, where people derive protection, not from a militarised State but, through the creation of structures of mutual nurturance and protection within and across community spaces. Self-interest can then be perceived to lie in the larger social interest, in the welfare of a relational complex.

Communities are to be seen as relational complexes that are ontologically and morally prior to, though by no means abrogative of, persons who too are enabled to regain individual identities. Redefining the individual's roles and positions in community spaces can provide alternative sources of security and democratic participation in which the individual good derives its authenticity from a common good, and individual freedom is seen as freedom for all, not freedom at the cost of others.

The European concepts of society, State, and democracy conceptualise the self as autonomous, individualistic, self-interested, egoistic, fundamentally isolated from others and threatened by these others, unless the others are dominated and subjugated by the self -- or by a transcendent entity like a centralised State, that is then dominated by a few selves in the name of all. This personal security involves generating insecurity in others. Freedom and democracy for the self involves violation of the freedom and democratic rights of others.

Ethnicity can provide, together with social movements and citizens' actions, a different ground for security and democracy which through the new collectivities of civil society are able to translate into real security and democracy for all, including the most excluded, oppressed and marginalised. It is only through a clear and coherent identification with the new social consciousness being thrown up by social movements that ethnicity can regenerate and recover spaces in civil society.

Without such a new thrust of common identity, even the new consciousness of an ethnic variety will generate new universalising and militaristic tendencies which, by insisting on excluding others, will destroy civil society even as they fight the existing State system. Fundamentalism and terrorism are modelled too much on the systems they fight to be real challenges to them – the former through its excessive universalisation of particular cultures and the resultant threat to other cultures, the latter through its excessive dependence on the culture of violence.

The second reason why ethnicity needs to be linked to other movements – the human rights movements, the survival movements, the movements based on identities of gender and age cohorts, the ecology movement, the literary and spiritual movements for self-respect and self-determination of subjugated peoples, the peace movements – is that without such links it has the danger of itself becoming negativised by implicitly accepting the 'otherness' of the subjugated self and reinforcing the excluding paradigm that has been so useful in projects of domination. It will also fail to take realistic account of certain new situations (some of which are irreversible), that have already occurred under the impact of the age of modern science and technology and the modern secular State and thus speak and act from a dead or disappearing ground of options.

On the other hand, social movements that address themselves to issues of equity and justice also need to be informed by ethnicity. This is because without locating themselves in the struggle for collective identities and the search for community, movements can themselves become new sources of fragmentation and erosion of security. Movements of human rights, for instance, often adopt the atomising tendencies of the modern Western worldview and reduce rights and responsibilities to the individual level, thus inadvertently eroding the social moorings and security of the weak and the already marginalised strata of society.

Without ethnicity, social movements fail to address themselves to the issue of rebuilding the community as a basic political instrument for curbing the power and greed of dominant groups and individuals. The positive promise of ethnicity lies not in a 'return to the tribe' or the mere 'revival' of a particular culture. That, quite clearly, is not even possible. It lies, instead, in the building of a social order which celebrates diversity and organic unity, and is organised around principles of equity, justice, peace and dignity as the new social movements are redefining these concepts in a new framework of social context and intellectual search.

The basic search in all this is to open up civil spaces for the citizen who happens to be living in a plural society, but whose basic identities of a primary and secondary kind are in the danger of being at once swamped and done away with. They are being swamped by the demands of an all-encroaching State, of a market that reduces all needs to standardised 'commodities' and an information order that superimposes a 'universal' culture over diverse national and sub-national cultures. They are being done away with by the permeation of modern technology into not just economic, but

broader social spaces and modes of communications, interpersonal interaction and even intimate arenas of friendship, love and conviviality.

In the public sphere, the technocratic State both dominates and abrogates the democratic process by reducing and delegitimising the arena of politics; it is a design to close rather than open up civil spaces. This is then responded to by negativist identities of a communal kind that exclude others and in their own way insist on new homogenisations and monotheistic drives, and further close up spaces for the ordinary citizen. In turn, as we have already seen, such communal appeals are utilised and exploited by the technocratic elite that turns chauvinist and militant.

Genuine ethnicity, if it is to be humane and rooted in the richness of human diversity, must be seen as an answer to all these tendencies. It is to be seen as an answer to the centralising State, to the techno-managerial model of the economy, to the hegemony of the market, and to the inane vulgarity of the mass media and the advertising agencies. It is to be seen as countering the continuous contractions, negations and closings in that the technocratic vision of the modern State and market necessarily involves. And it is to do this by positing the opposite of this — a continuous expansion, affirmation and opening up of civil spaces. Finally, it is to do this by not counterposing culture and community against the State, as has so often happened in the negativist and reactive expressions of ethnicity. Rather, it must call for transcending narrow communal and exclusivist modes, exercising self-control and civilised restraints on oneself and one's kith and kin and, on the basis of such understanding, transforming the full scale and scope of the State by making it a mechanism of democratic and decentralised participation.

Once this happens, we will be able to transmute the whole sphere of public discourse and process of resolving conflicts with a new spirit and framework of governance; of humane governance; of governance in which everyone is involved and through which a new coherence and a new togetherness is sought to be achieved in and through the very diversities and multiple identities that give to each and every one a sense of pride, dignity and belonging.

Celebration of diversity

We can conclude this essay by conceiving ethnicity as a call for celebrating diversity instead of either undermining it under some abstract universalist logic or using it for fomenting negativist reactions to existing hegemonies which can only engender new forms of homogenisation, exclusion and chauvinism. Diversity is not to be seen as a problem to be managed, but a resource to build upon, a basic resource emanating from the very nature of both human and natural orders. Diversity happens to be the essential 'nature of nature'; it also happens to be the essential characteristic of culture throughout human history. The same is the case with any lasting and self-sustaining polity: hence the worldwide preference — and movements — for decentralisation of political systems. These movements for decentralisation have gradually been moving

out of mere devolution of powers and authorities from national centres lower down within the governmental apparatus, into arrangements in which myriad spaces within the civil society are opened up and various communities provided scope for self-governance, identity and a pride of place within the larger human setting.

Such a striving is aimed towards two simultaneous goals, as Mahatma Gandhi continuously stressed: restoration of dignity to the individual and development of resilience to the social process. The two are closely interrelated; there can be no dignity for the individual if social resilience breaks down or gives way to a permanent state of tension and alienation. The Western conception of freedom and dignity are based on a competitive and atomising ethos: it necessarily undermines diversity and emphasises 'freedom from' external constraints rather than 'freedom to' achieve one's own realisation in communion with that of others.

Conceived in this manner, diversity becomes the only enduring and creative basis of unity and coherence in a world undergoing massive transformation as well as a world seeking peace and 'order' that are neither imposed nor passive, but are rooted in justice and equality and authenticity of diverse cultures and lifestyles.

Such a conception of unity and coherence is inherently democratic. It can sustain a process of change that does not lead to alienation, a system of justice that does not necessitate polarisation, a form of order that is non-oppressive and a framework of peace that becomes a condition of self-affirmation of both individuals and communities. It is in and through such a celebration of diversity that human conflicts — which will continue to exist so long as life exists — can become catalysts of democratic transformation.

3

India: Nationality formation under retarded capitalism

Javeed Alam

The problem

This chapter deals with an aspect of the national question in India. Most of the multi-national States among Third World countries have had to face situations in which what looked like formed nationalities break up, or disparate groups of people sharing vague identity marks come together to demand recognition as separate national groups and struggle for some form of political demarcation. In either case we encounter the necessity of redrawing national boundaries or resisting these demands. Either way, in such situations, the national problem or the ethnic claims acquire salience or get, as some put it, 'over-determined'. It is therefore important to analyse the problematic theoretical aspects as well as the conditions centred around such a break up or amalgamation. In doing so, this chapter will concentrate on trying to understand the historically changing and many-sided influences of capitalism on the processes of nationality formation and disintegration in these countries.

Earlier preliminary studies by this author¹ showed that it is fruitful, in this epoch of imperialism, to carefully scrutinise and map out the altered patterns, the social and political implications of contemporary Third World capitalism. This capitalism is itself a hybrid standing on crutches, imperialism on one side and landlordism on the other, for its political survival. It is appropriate to call it retarded capitalism. Not simply because of its internal infirmities and its proven inability to overcome or destroy the pre-capitalist ideologies and structures, but above all because of its tendency to generate widespread and increasing disproportions between the developed and underdeveloped spheres in society and thereby deform old social structures and institutions. Thus, the foundational logic of creation and dissolution is quite different from what it was under ascendant capitalism in the classical period of nation-state formation. In this late phase of the epoch of imperialism, the concept of retardation is

useful to understand both, the content and consequences of capitalism in the Third World.

Worldviews based on ethnicity or caste and religious community come to possess a new political tenacity within and across different linguistic-cultural communities – the most natural basis of nationalities in formation – within our multinational societies. This kind of a development is an unsettling process. How do factors like these impinge on nationality formation?

Take illustrations from developments in two regions of the Indian subcontinent, pre-partition Bengal and contemporary Jharkhand. Capitalist development in India, both during the colonial period and after independence has been far more advanced than in most other countries of the Third World. In particular, the formation of modern indigenous classes was way ahead compared with countries like Brazil or Argentina with comparable levels of development. Furthermore, the Indian bourgeoisie has also shown considerable maturity in handling – difficult internal problems without recourse to open dictatorship. In fact, the Indian bourgeoisie led by its monopoly sector has been able to lead the Indian State through the framework of an imperfect and declining bourgeois democracy whatever the degree of its dependence on landlords in the ruling class alliance. Yet, neither has Indian capitalism displayed the capacity to overcome or absorb ethnicity and primordiality, nor has the bourgeoisie been able to satisfactorily handle the national question in India in a democratic way. This is in itself an indication of the inabilities of retarded capitalism to create social unities on modern secular lines in the Third World as ascendant capitalism could do earlier in many parts of western Europe.

The first section of this study simply presents the most obvious characteristics and trends of the regions being used as illustrations; in the second, a few theoretical posers are raised; in the third and fourth sections, details of the patterns of development and the causal chains that it generates relevant from the view point of the national question are examined; and finally, the fifth section is a discussion of some general implications.

The two cases

The general outlines of the two cases, Bengal before Indian independence in 1947, and present day Jharkhand (see map on p.55) respectively, show clearly how the variations have become many in the way nationality or ethnic consciousness takes shape compared with the European experience; all this within one single large area of the Indian sub-continent. What is equally interesting is the light these cases throw on what happens to the internal variations based on ethnic or primordial divisions within linguistic-cultural communities under the influence of large scale socio-economic transformation through capitalism.

Bengal had all the characteristics of a budding nationality – a linguistic-cultural zone with a well developed language, linguistic unification across communities, a growing literary tradition within a compact region, existence as a unified

politico-administrative unit in the pre-colonial period with a degree of autonomy, etc. The colonial State also generated economic forces which integrated diverse regions and strata of Bengali society into it. And yet, instead of these factors leading to a unified national group, the Bengali speaking people split, along religious community lines, into two States. The split was between Hindus and Muslims as well as, although of lesser significance, between Hindus and Namasudras.

In Jharkhand, on the contrary, none of the necessary historical and political conditions for the rise of a national movement seemed to prevail. Yet half a century of political history shows evolution towards such a condition. The underlying tendency has been in the nature of shifts from ethnic towards trans-ethnic dimensions as manifested in various social and cultural developments as well as in the many diverse Jharkhand political movements. The region is a mosaic of diverse but related tribes² like Mundas, Oraons, Santhals and many others, as well as non-tribal ethnic groups like the Kurmi-Mahato, Momin (Muslim weavers), scheduled castes and so on. The region is thus an ethnic aggregation of 'tribal' and non-tribal people.³ Most of these tribes and non-tribal groups do not as yet have written languages or a common literary tradition. But they are rich in folklore and around this a common culture and literary tradition is claimed to be taking shape. All these ethnic groups have suffered the same kinds of economic exchanges⁴ at the hands of outsider exploitative elements, known in the local parlance as '*Dikus*'.

These ethnic groups have a very undiversified economy with a low technology-productive base, concentrated exclusively in agriculture and primitive manufacturing. They have lived in close proximity to the relatively highly developed national groups, with a much greater development of productive forces, as well as of cultural and literary traditions. Yet, they have not been amalgamated into the adjacent advanced formations, belying the formulations and predictions of Engels about such formations as well as those of anthropologists like N.K. Bose,⁵ G.S. Ghurye,⁶ etc. The evidence seems to point towards a different kind of amalgamation of all these diverse ethnic people into a trans-ethnic unity claiming the status of a nationality.⁷ The questions to go into therefore are: Why is it that ethnicity of these various ethnic groups did not assert itself?; why did they not get assimilated into the adjacent advanced national formations?; why is it that ethnic boundaries collapsed and all the diverse people moved towards demanding recognition as a separate national group with a State of their own?

Hence the need to counterpose pre-partition Bengal with contemporary Jharkhand and to study, in detail, what can happen to internal variations of an ethnic type within a potential national formation.

In Bengal, communal splits and communal exclusiveness appeared at the turn of this century. This is surprising because earlier, the popular upsurges amongst the peasantry were non-communal in character, wherein both Hindus and Muslims had jointly fought the surplus extraction by the colonial State. Examples of these are the Fakir Sanyassi Rebellion (1770s), the Titu Mir and Faraidi Movements (1820

onwards), the Indigo Revolt (1860s) and the Pabna Peasant Rebellions (1870s). The demands made and the slogans raised during these revolts concerned the peasantry in general, being neither exclusive to Hindus nor Muslims. The symbols of State power and its agents like the landlords and money lenders were the targets of attack. The elites amongst the Hindus and Muslims, although they sometimes acted together, were indifferent or hostile towards the peasantry.⁸ It is only after the successful suppression of the peasantry in the wake of the Pabna rent disturbances that communal exclusiveness appeared. This coincided with a drastic shift in politics, from popular initiatives and militant mass struggles to elite manoeuvres and loss-and-gain calculations with the beginning of constitutional concessions.

In Jharkhand, comprising Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas in Bihar, earlier outbursts were led by *rajas*⁹ or chiefs against the British efforts to assess for land revenue or to evict tribal chiefs from the lands. Starting with individual tribes, these outbursts often got linked with others into general conflagrations. The examples are the Great Kol Rebellions (1819, 1931–32), the Santhal Insurrection (1855) and the Birsa Munda Rebellion (1895). They were directed against the depredations of traders, merchants, money lenders, landlords and so on, and were fuelled by a sense of exasperation and loss of identity. They were inspired by exceptional individuals who sometimes also claimed divinity (Bir Singh Kanhu and Siddhu from the Santhals, Birsa Munda from the Munda tribe) and identified the enemy as *Diku*, the outsider-exploiter. None of these movements were revivalist, spiritualist, messianic or characterised by aspirations of the Sanskritisation sort.¹⁰ They were agrarian movements seeking emancipation from rapacious agents of primitive accumulation.¹¹ Most of these movements were suppressed by the use of brutal military force.

After a period of lull, the dominant style of politics changed, approximately from 1915 onwards. Neo-literates from amongst the ordinary people were drawn into constitutional politics, which meant regular meetings, resolutions, memorandums, deputations and petitions, coupled with social reform and welfare activities. There was decreasing recourse to religious and community symbols, with organisation and institutional politics replacing 'inspirational' modes. There was greater emphasis on intra-and inter-tribal unity, as well as alliances between tribal and non-tribal forces.¹² This gave rise to trans-ethnic political platforms indicating that an underlying trans-ethnic unity was in the process of formation.

In the varying patterns of social transformation in these regions two opposite trends can be seen. One, political consolidation of the ethnic tends to distort long term secular developments whereas, two, its transcendence negates the force of the primordial. We can now pose the problem: Why, in spite of the initial advantageous conditions, did a unified popular national movement not emerge in Bengal, degenerating instead into communally divisive politics? How, in the absence of the 'necessary' pre-conditions, did the ethnic upsurges of Jharkhand evolve into contemporary national sentiments struggling for recognition and for political demarcation?¹³

What to look for

When evidence, as in the two cases discussed above, directs us towards generalisations of a contradictory type, what is the logical bearing of evidence for the dialectical understanding of historical events? How does one look for determinations or ask whether the causal chains shaping the events emanate from the same forces of social transformation? The question also arises: Given such cases as we have, how does one evaluate the importance of what are considered to be the common properties in the evolution of national movements and nationality consciousness? It is also necessary to ask then: What is the status of a factor, say for example, a common language, which is considered to be a necessary condition in the making of nations and nationalities? Religion or community-bonds or other traditionally inherited forms of consciousness, which earlier were swept aside by the unifying force of ascendant capitalism, can give rise to deviant patterns of development in the contemporary Third World. What we are witnessing in many ways now is the objective assertion, as dominant features, of what were once minor distinctions or idiosyncratic tendencies. We have to seek to understand how these have become stable and determine many historical variations. That is, how religions for instance, while not being an attribute of nationalities as in earlier phases, have now become a factor in splitting potential nationalities into separate national formations. Thus, under what circumstances, can they be a prospective factor? Given our theoretical understanding these can often only be understood in a historically retrospective sense; that is, methodologically, by a process of backward extrapolation.

Marxist theory has been more than adequate in accounting for economic crises and the stunted patterns of economic developments in this era of imperialism. But it seems to me that it has not paid sufficient attention to similar phenomenon in the non-economic spheres of social reality. If the material foundation of society — the mode of production and the class formations therefrom — are considered the main determinants of social forms, then it should be obvious that the character of the contemporary Third World capitalism as one of stunted growth and of a retarded nature will condition the development of social forms in its own peculiar way. It should be equally obvious that these determinations cannot be of the same nature as in the epoch of rising capitalism. One of its essential features was to bring about all round independent industrialisation, which is no longer so with capitalism in Third World countries. How and in what ways they differ and will continue to differ from those of the period of ascendant capitalism with its revolutionary transformative capacities can only be a matter of concrete investigations. And as consequent implications will vary from one society to another and within the same societies, there cannot, therefore, be any *a priori* transfers of understanding. The impossibility of transition through capitalism or the far from imminent possibility of revolutions in the very near future, create the conditions whereby the imperialist stranglehold over the life processes of these societies and its manipulation and distortions render many natural possibilities

in our societies redundant; unless, of course, the left forces are powerful enough to provide bulwarks.

Within the context of the Third World countries today, as has been so far for the last many decades, their potentialities and unpredictable ways of materialising are more important than the given historical actualities of the past. Contemporary Marxist theory on the problem of nationalities and the processes of national evolution or what has come to be known as the national question is largely based on the recurrent sequences of history or past actualities. The result has been that, what seem to be common factors across ages like the market or the bourgeoisie, we have not been able to distinguish as non-specific factors. The market for example has no longer the same consequences for society as it used to have in the previous epoch.

The Marxist theory on the national question has not put itself to rigorous scientific scrutiny after the momentous upheavals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe from where it got its theoretical base. The theory is rich in resources, methodological leads and class cues and is therefore capable of both extension and adaptation. But, often Marxist analysis of contemporary situations uses past conclusions reached in the context of earlier different concrete situations as premises today. In the face of a large number of deviant sequences or patterns and empirical peculiarities in the contemporary Third World where hidden potentialities fructify in unforeseen ways, explanations based on deductions from old conclusions and formulations carry the risk of turning out to be sheer dogma.

The case of Bengal

Pre-partition Bengal saw the rise of Muslim exclusiveness, that emerged in the late nineteenth century out of the conditions emanating from the pre-colonial period. Although the Muslim kings did rule Bengal, it was one of the very few areas where a ruling class from among Bengali Muslims did not emerge. The ruling class of Bengal was overwhelmingly Hindu. When the large *Zamindaris* were formed (1700–27) by consolidation, more than three-fourths of the *Zamindars*,¹⁴ big and small, were Hindus.¹⁵ So were a majority of the *Talukdars*.¹⁶ The Muslims enjoyed a preponderance as *Jagirdars*.¹⁷ The Muslim rulers in Bengal, as elsewhere, maintained effective control over large areas through an elaborate network of military establishments and *Jagirs* were created for this purpose. This Muslim majority in the military functions extended well into the lower ranks of *foujdars*¹⁸ and *darogas*.¹⁹ Not only that, in certain spheres like judicial administration, the Muslims enjoyed almost complete monopoly.²⁰ Unlike the *Zamindaris*, which were hereditary, the *Jagirdari* could be terminated for dereliction of duty. The *Jagirdars* were officials who were expected to keep an eye on all the *Zamindars*, *rajas* and revenue-collectors.

These Muslim officials were of non-Bengali origin, most of them being of Turko-Afghan, Persian, Mughal and Arab descent.²¹ They spoke Persian, later Urdu, but generally did not know Bengali, which was the language of peasants and artisans.

They lived in urban areas of closed settlements and shunned contact with the Bengali Muslims. This distance between the elites and the peasant masses remained unchanged up to the end of the last century. They were thus not only racially different, but were also structurally alien to the local society. There was therefore, little in common between the Muslim peasant masses and the Muslim gentry. This relationship becomes crucial in the rise of communal exclusiveness among the Muslims during the period of nationalist politics. Only much later in the twentieth century did the barriers of culture and language break.

When the British took over the reins of power, they eased out the *Jagirdars*, *subedars*, etc. from the ruling establishment. Over time, the old *Zamindars* were also relieved of their lands by the new moneyed classes. In the case of Hindus, lands passed from Hindu to Hindu; there was little communal tension, only individual resentment. However, most of the land with Muslims also passed into Hindu hands, causing communal tension. However, this tension did not become unmanageable, because the State service continued to provide security to the Muslim elite and they continued to cooperate with the new administration as well as with the Hindu upper strata.

The rapid decline of the Muslim elites started in 1837, following the switchover from Persian to English and the vernacular, which foreclosed employment opportunities for them.²² This gave rise to two inter-related processes. At one level it laid the basis of communal exclusiveness and articulation of demands in the name of the entire Muslim community. On the other hand, the decline forced the *ashrafs*²³ (respectable people, who were mostly non-Bengali), to go for an English education, but after long resistance; in this they were joined soon by the *atrafis*²⁴ (lowly placed, who were mostly Bengalis), who came from peasant stock, but amongst whom there were many from a rich peasant background. Very soon, they became the equals of the *ashrafs*.²⁵

The Hindu *bhadralok*²⁶ (gentlemen), aspirants to a new class outlook, took readily to English as it merely meant switching from one alien language (Persian/Arabic/Urdu) to another, which gave them a hegemonic position in the new State structure. For the *ashrafs*, drawn by backward pulling memories of political power and grandeur, it meant the replacement of heritage and privilege. Nevertheless, once the quest for modern education gained momentum, aspirations for jobs at various levels, depending upon the social background, was a natural outcome. This was creating the ground of future complementarity between the ascendant sections of the declining erstwhile elite and the slowly swelling rising generations of educated ordinary Bengali Muslims on the one hand, and communal confrontation between Muslims and Hindus on the other.

By the turn of the century, education for the Muslims from better-off families had become the main source of social mobility. Around this time, several societies and associations²⁷ of Muslims had already started awakening their 'brethren' to the need for education and had also started petitioning the government for job reservation. These were signs of the acceptance of British rule by the Muslims and an urge for a

share in the new constellation of power. The activities of these associations and the appeals to the government had a ready response among the newly educated Muslim masses who were finding themselves badly disadvantaged *vis-a-vis* the Hindus in the competitive arena. The Muslim elites were ready to cut themselves off from the Hindus to build a base among the Muslim masses to bargain with the State for a bigger share of the cake. This was the beginning of communal exclusiveness.

The reaction of 'enlightened Hindu representatives' to these demands was one of hostility,²⁸ and in turn structured the response of the Muslim 'representatives'. This coincided with the emergence of the INC (Indian National Congress) and the beginning of constitutional concessions. At this point the politics that was taking shape on the constitutional plane was a gentleman's contest between the colonial power and the modern English educated elites from within the ascendant classes and strata. These classes, like the *Zamindars* and the merchants were from the Bengali Hindu community; we will leave out here the nascent bourgeoisie in Bengal because it was largely made up of the non-Bengali up country business castes. In the elections held for the District and Local Boards under the Local Self-Government Act (1887), the Hindu elites succeeded in capturing these newly created symbols of power and prestige. Here then was a new power in the making which was getting communally monopolised and creating serious misgivings amongst the emerging Muslim leaders.²⁹

Given the social and class configuration, the nationalist leadership was afraid of an awakened peasantry. Outside of its incipient anti-colonialist nationalist goals, its political platform was yet to fully crystallise and was a kind of mild reformism. In contrast to this, the popular peasant struggles, although lacking a clear perspective, were strongly anti-feudal in character. The rupture between these two kinds of politics was of far-reaching consequences for the evolution of the national question, as the dominant nationalist politics could not even formulate the agrarian question in a democratic manner. The Muslim leadership that felt left out, succeeded in keeping the Muslim masses away from nationalist politics. It could, instead, speak on their behalf for educational concessions and job reservations and separate seats in electoral bodies.

In the countryside, a parallel though unconnected religious stir was occurring amongst the Muslim peasantry, which contained elements of revivalism, purification, social mobility and secular aspirations.³⁰ This was led by the *moulvis* and *mullahs* and arose after the suppression and defeat of the peasant uprisings; the Indigo Revolt and the Pabna disturbances. The defeated peasantry was in a despondent and sullen mood and without a leadership or spokesman. Constitutional politics requires capabilities which the peasantry left to itself is found to be lacking in unless independent organisations have taken enduring roots. The essence of constitutional politics lies in prolonged negotiations, complicated compromises, etc. It is a kind of politics that is alien to the sensibilities and capacities of ordinary people like the peasant masses. The community reform movement which therefore took root was similar to the movement

among the Namasudra community³¹ in that both had few links with the elite and newly educated and met with similar responses from the enlightened Hindus.

The colonial rulers, of course, chose to intervene, as the champions of Muslim interests, into a space created by the growing communal differences and exclusiveness and by their own divisive manoeuvres. All newly ascendant groups, Muslims and Hindus alike, had shown a tendency in colonial India to lean upon the State to consolidate their position. Thus started the wheeling-dealing between the Muslim elite and the colonial rulers. But what made the consequences of this type of Muslim politics highly disruptive was the time factor. It coincided with the growing anti-colonial tide and thus blocked the unification of the nationalistic upsurge that was to follow. The calculated response of the British rulers *vis-a-vis* the Muslim aspirations was to encourage bargaining and keep the flow of concessions at a level critical enough to impede the development of alternative modes of thought and struggle among the Muslims. Moreover, what strengthened this tendency among the Muslims has been the character of parliamentary bourgeois reformism to seek and encourage concession through bargaining. In a growing ethos of this kind, backward social groups and strata can become victims of divisive politics.

In spite of the earlier defeat of militant peasant movements, peasant discontent was again on the rise due to the commercialisation of agriculture.³² At the turn of the century jute was grown mostly in Muslim majority areas on small holdings by poorer sections of the peasantry. This period was marked by the establishment and expansion of the jute textile industry in Bengal, coincident with cotton textiles in Bombay.³³ Jute established a direct link between agriculture and industry; thus small peasants became victims of world market price fluctuations. Further, moneylenders and traders, who were mostly Hindus, had started charging higher interest rates in the jute belt where the peasantry was mostly Muslim.³⁴ In the growing atmosphere of communal violence, they became easy targets for the Muslim peasantry. The great majority of big *Zamindars* and *rentiers* were also Hindus.³⁵ When developing capitalist penetrations of the agrarian economy capitalised the value of land, of improvements and clearing of jungles and fixed the demand on this value through competitive rents,³⁶ it was not without repercussions for the communalisation of peasant consciousness. In this mode of exploitation with its tendency towards increasing surplus extraction, landed inequality and growing differentiations within the Muslim peasantry become less and less important in the perception of contradictions by the Muslim peasant masses and therefore of minor political significance. Hence many possibilities of a radical break in evolving politics did not materialise. In this context, the peculiar nexus between politics and economics did not allow for the channelisation of class conflicts into class struggle, but rather, provided the ground for their deflection into communal contentions, tussles and riots.

After the defeat of the militant peasant movements and the stabilisation of bourgeois reformism, the only way of unifying peasant aspirations with the nationalist movement, was through struggles centred around a radical agrarian programme. This unfortunately was not, as noted earlier, forthcoming from the nationalist leadership in Bengal. The leadership representing the socially oppressed and economically

exploited Muslim peasantry, typified by Fazal ul Haq, comprised rich peasants but who had generally only tenurial holdings, and was therefore characterised by ambivalence.³⁷ Their economic programme was unambiguously anti-feudal, but politics was full of vacillations. It needed a share in power, education and jobs much like the Muslim elite, but had radical agrarian orientations in its opposition to landlordism, and merchant and usurious capital. However, both the elitist Muslim leadership as well as the nationalist leadership of Bengal in the 1920s and 1930s, were suspicious and afraid of an awakened peasantry, Hindu or Muslim, whether under communist leadership or a populist radical like Fazal ul Haq. At one point, however, the radical tendencies under Fazal ul Haq temporarily broke away from the big landed interests and formed the Krishak Praja Party. The landlords and city 'aristocrats' in turn formed the United Muslim Party. The structurally weak peasantry needed a strong democratic ally, and Congress consistently failed due to its historically conditioned class outlook and myopic obsession with the cultural and social values of Bengali *bhadralok* politicians. Their attitude was the same towards the Namasudras. There was no strong left movement to bridge the gap; the Communist Party of India was still striking roots.

Until the late 1930s, the political basis of a future united Bengali nationality was an open possibility. But after 1937, in the elections to the Provincial Assembly, the Congress Party was not able to isolate the Muslim League. Fazal ul Haq and the Krishak Praja Party, after an initial valiant fight against the Muslim League, collapsed and after vacillating moved over to collaborate with the Muslim League — a typical petty bourgeois capitulation. The Muslim League leadership paved the way for the division of Bengal. The peasant masses, then as now, swung hither and thither, at the mercy of bourgeois politics. The Hindu section of the peasantry, though hostile to the landlords, was forced to go along with them when separatism based on religious identities became imminent.

Peasant consciousness is made up of contradictory elements; on the one hand there can be radical tendencies seeking emancipation from oppression and blatant exploitation, on the other hand are the traditionally inherited beliefs, values and institutions. Depending on the situation, it can take the offensive and exhibit militant activity or withdraw on the defensive into its inherited world of relative security. It is this contradictory nature of peasant consciousness that complicates the national question: Only working class parties can provide stable ideological moorings through enduring peasant organisations, and these were not available. If these were available, as happened later in West Bengal after independence and the partition of the province, with the growth of the communist movement and the Kisan Sabhas (peasant fronts) led by the Communist Party, it is possible that the peasant discontent would have been channelised into class struggles.

When the communist movement is not powerful enough to decisively intervene in such a situation, the only way in which a bourgeois political formation can keep the peasantry from succumbing to separatist communal or ethnic demands is by handling the agrarian question in a democratic way. Its minimum basis can only be "land to the tillers", the old Leninist formula, which then can provide the starting point for wiping out feudal relations. The Muslim and Hindu peasantry in post-partition Bengal do not

simply co-exist as in many other parts of India but are a part of a common front waging class struggle. Today, when a third to half of the total population is made up of Muslim peasants, ethnicity or communalism do not grow into a divisive force.

Muslim peasant demands were essentially economic and the nationalist programme, when seen through Muslim eyes, appeared mainly political. Imperialism astutely manipulated this drift by portraying that Hindu political demands could not be met, but Muslim economic demands would be met and that the Muslims stood to gain by going it alone. The Muslim peasant leadership from rich peasant families fell victim to this divisive manoeuvre and collaborated with imperialism, leading to the partition of Bengal. The ethnic-communal variations within a nationally unified belt did become divisive, disrupting the secular tendency that had for long been operating within this region.

The Jharkhand case

India: Jharkhand region



In the case of Jharkhand, the evidence indicates that people from diverse ethnic groups have moved closer together, with a persistent demand for recognition as a distinct group with a national make-up. Herein are the underlying historical tendencies that need to be identified rather than the overt problem of support or opposition of a given movement.

Today, it is a curious fact that the people of the region agitate against the construction of major irrigation projects or the setting up of big industries. For them, even the construction of a road means, primarily, opening the area to the *Dikus* and the police, i.e. to exploitation and terror. Historically viewed, for the people of Jharkhand, developmental activities have meant land alienation and pauperisation. Their opposition is not the misguided opposition of 'primitives' to national development, as it is prone to be portrayed.

In this sense, the predilections, the preferences and demands of the people in Jharkhand cannot be categorised as regionalism, as it is generally understood. Regionalism essentially is a demand for more and more resources and special privileges for one's region. It is also important not to look at all turbulence in the areas inhabited by tribes as of the same kind; such unfortunately has been the tendency. There is no such thing as a single tribal problem.

Both tribals and non-tribals within this region are not 'primitives'. They have been engaged in peasant activities for several hundred years, without the oppression of the caste system in operation, as in the other parts. They are ready and eager to co-operate in the development of modern agriculture with its attendant paraphernalia. There is nothing traditional or primitive in this outlook. The seemingly contradictory positions are the impact and consequence of the type of capitalist penetration into the region.

It is important to know the significance of the cultural configuration in the life of these people. The specificity of this configuration also partly explains why the political expression of the present discontent tends towards the nationalist dimensions. The social existence of these diverse indigenous people is marked not simply by the absence of caste divisions, but more so by their distinct concepts and practices on a whole range of specific life situations. The most important feature in this cultural configuration is their conception of the man-nature relationship; it is made up of significant notions and practices — harmonising their interactions with the surrounding world, and drawing upon it. As an extension of this, they have peculiar notions of man-tree and man-animal relationships. In addition, man-woman relations and the associated notions of sexuality are also quite distinct, as also the ways of relating to children. There are undoubtedly elements of the primitive-animistic in these relationships, but there is also a great deal of the radical-progressive content quite similar to the new emancipatory movements in the advanced capitalist world about ecology, women, children's rights and even insanity. Although ethnic divisions among the indigenous people of this region abound, they broadly have an identity of outlook on these and other similar questions of social life.

Significantly, when all of these people with their inherited divisions have come under a similar type of sustained stress, there has been a growth of a sense of community induced by the inversion of the sense of loss of community. This provides a common psychological ground for structuring response patterns to the pressures of the external world. Their cultural configuration, under threat of disintegration, compensates for the absence of a common language.³⁸ These people then begin to define themselves. A self-definition in which all the ethnic groups of an indigenous population within a region start by saying: We are 'non' Biharis or 'non' Oriyas, and so on. This 'non' can generate over time a commonness and mutuality.

Marxist presence and activity among these people as well as radical analyses have to be sensitive to this dimension of the problem. The totality of their condition, as spelt out, can go into the making of a special type of 'national make-up' in the pan-Indian situation as it exists today.³⁹

Jharkhand is a very heavily industrialised region. It also has a large concentration of extractive and mining industry – mainly coal, iron ore, bauxite, limestone, etc.⁴⁰ Some of the most prestigious of companies are located in the region: Heavy Engineering Corporation, Bokaro Steel, TISCO, Associated Cement, etc. Consequently, the per capita power consumption is 204.4 kwh as against a national average of 96.3 kwh. However, only 5 per cent of the villages are electrified as against a national average of 27.3 per cent.

In the nationwide creation of an industrial working class since the last quarter of the nineteenth century all over the country, a major part has been drawn from the indigenous population. Not so in Jharkhand. The tribals of Jharkhand have gained entry into the working class only as low paid unskilled workers on a hire-and-fire basis from a standing reserve army of labourers. Every technologically sophisticated industry has a stable core of highly skilled workers. In Jharkhand, this core has mostly been drawn from other regions of the country. The local people or the indigenous inhabitants, both tribals and non-tribal, have been relegated to a very special section of the proletariat: *khalasis*,⁴¹ peons, scavengers, etc. This is especially true of the mining sector, where oral contracts were the rule until the nationalisation of the coal mines in 1971. Thus fewer jobs, poorer wages and inferior working conditions have been the lot of the Jharkhandis. Following coal nationalisation in 1971, as many as 50,000 tribals lost their jobs in a week in the Dhanbad region alone,⁴² as with nationalisation came promises of more secure working conditions, better wages, etc. Thus, the necessary characteristic of a working class – relative permanence in a socially determined productive process – is lacking. They are workers in industry but not as yet a stable industrial working class; a kind of ethnically constituted sub-proletariat like the coloured workers in Europe.

This picture holds for industry as well as government services, wherein all positions where specialised knowledge is required are held by the immigrants, who are estimated to constitute 10–15 per cent of the population.⁴³ The local people have become 'proletarian vagabonds', an ethnic sub-proletariat oscillating between work

and unemployment, and moving between urban and rural settings. This ethnically based division among working people gives rise to ideological convulsions among the indigenous people.

It cannot be argued that this phenomenon is of recent origin due to sudden and rapid industrialisation. It has indeed been a characteristic feature of the mines which have operated in the region since the late nineteenth century. The State power, both prior to independence and subsequently, has been aware of the conditions resulting from the massive developments, but has never taken remedial steps whereby the indigenous people become partners in development. Even for the near future, indicators do not point towards any betterment of the local people. Increasingly, industry has more places for the educated and skilled blue and white collars in proportion to the unskilled labourers, thus worsening employment prospects for the indigenous people. There is no evidence of crash training programmes for jobs for the locals. There has been a net decline of plan assistance for tribal 'upliftment'.⁴⁴ Enforced participation in economic activity through employment has increased dependence, impeded skill formation and prevented support of dependents for long periods necessary for education.⁴⁵ There is evidence of continued pauperisation linked directly to the massive public investment in power, irrigation, industry and mining. The nationalisation of forest produce such as tendu leaf, honey, etc. has been the cause of clashes between tribals and State authorities; the collection centres being far away, have necessitated travel of 30–40 km every few days after collection.

Serious pauperisation has also been caused by large scale alienation from land in the case of big public sector projects.⁴⁶ Land alienation had been arrested after the ferocious and bloody nineteenth century revolts, but has again increased sharply due to a number of reasons. These include the growth of ancillary industry around the public sector projects, the legal conversion of agricultural to non-agricultural land for the purposes of urbanisation, etc. Land alienation has meant pauperisation because of the utter failure of compensation mechanisms created by the State, which Roy Burman has characterised as the "displacement–compensation–displacement continuum".⁴⁷

In the earlier epoch, what had happened in terms of land alienation and the loss of community identity was linked in the popular imagination to the depredations of traders, moneylenders and landlords from outside the region. In a curious way, today the State has acquired a status equivalent to the predatory colonial agents. Opposition to the outsider–exploiters, the *Dikus*, has been the primary source of unification, which has cut across ethnic identities and boundaries between tribals, Kurmi–Mahato peasantry, Muslim weavers, etc. The presence of a tribal shell is now important only for ritual, marriage and social occasions and no longer for political mobilisation; tribalism as a pattern of politics is absent from popular agrarian struggles as well as from reactionary chauvinistic politics.

The efforts of reactionary forces at dividing the people are no longer in terms of tribal divisions, but in the name of Christian 'converts' versus Hindus, and other such cleavages. The erosion of ethnicity as a factor in politics is also reflected in the growth

of new unities as well as in the nature of the divisions and political conflicts which have displayed a consistent pattern of cutting across ethnic boundaries.⁴⁸ Thus, the identity of the Jharkhandis is being counterposed against the *Dikus*. This feature has provided the necessary nationality dimension in the growing self awareness of the people.

Influencing this process is the common sense of oppression amongst the people; not the market needs of the bourgeoisie as is often the case. Amongst the local inhabitants, there is no bourgeoisie in any sense of the term. At most, there are petty retail businesses that cannot even be glorified as entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly, political divisions as well as contradictory ideological postures do prevail,⁴⁹ but these are essentially born of living under a pervasive bourgeois condition and consist of ideological currents ranging from left extremism to all shades of right reaction; such currents occasionally acquire organisational form, blending with existing discontents from time to time. These are characteristic contradictory features of peasant politics in the absence of a powerful left organisation.

Just as there is no indigenous bourgeoisie,⁵⁰ there is no significant group of rich peasants and landlords either.⁵¹ About 86 per cent of land owners are poor peasants, 10 per cent are middle peasants and only 0.5 per cent can be categorised as rich peasants and/or landlords. The 3.4 per cent who own 10–25 acres cannot be categorised as rich peasants on the basis of land holdings alone, because the productivity of the land is very poor and has been so for a century.⁵² Most of the fertile lands are low-lying, and it is here that the *Diku* or landlords from outside the region are concentrated, having successfully driven away the locals to the uplands, where the soil is poor and productivity low.

Although land alienation is a common enough phenomenon all over India, here quite unlike most other regions, where exploiter–oppressor and the exploited–oppressed belong to the same region, they belong to people with a different national composition.

Nearly a century ago, W.W. Hunter had calculated that an ordinary retail shopkeeper or a man earning Rs.8 per month lived more comfortably than a 5 acre peasant.⁵³ In fact, to live as comfortably as a peon in government service, the peasant would have to own nearly 9 acres of lowland and 4.5 acres of upland.⁵⁴ Even then, Hunter had argued that a 25 acre peasant could not be considered a landlord.⁵⁵ Even today, 70 per cent of the land is drought prone and half of this extremely so.⁵⁶ Thus, in effect, most of the people are functionally landless; they have to sell their labour most of the time. Traditionally, a sizeable part of their livelihood used to be sustained by the forests. Initially the colonial State legislated away their forest rights, to be followed later by the legislations of free India.⁵⁷

Thus, though differentiation in land holdings does exist, it cannot, given its nature, be the criterion of locating a ruling class.⁵⁸ Tribals do exploit other tribals, yet this is far from creating a potential indigenous ruling class. In the case of Jharkhand, it is difficult even to assert that there exists a potential for development of ruling classes even without extensive private property as perhaps is the case in some of the African countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, etc. In this type of African situation, the

elites from the indigenous educated strata succeeded in wresting control at the time of independence of a sufficiently well developed control mechanism of the colonial State. They could thus gain the sort of political power which would flow from the ownership of private productive property.

On the contrary, in this region the pan-Indian ruling classes have failed. Failed even to assimilate the popular discontent because of the absence of a local ruling or middle class. Jharkhand represents the development of a mass consciousness still seeking appropriate articulation in order to express the social strangulation of the masses. The assimilation of petty bourgeois elements with their own political aspirations does pose conflicts of ideology; the absence of strong left-democratic movement leads to all kinds of vacillations and a bewildering array of spontaneous and militant forms.

The situation in Jharkhand therefore is not an issue to be seen as tied up with this or that party, or of a well formed class interest, or a unified movement, but rather as a development of mass consciousness still in search of modes of articulation appropriate to the contradictions in the region. These people who had remained in relative isolation since the Magadh period are now suddenly confronted with an unacceptable bourgeois model into which attempts are being made to forcibly assimilate them. The idea of a separate State easily appeals to them as a way out of this situation. Given the class situation in the region, what seems likely to determine the outcome is the nature of outside intervention; especially how quickly the organised left forces can resolve their differences and decisively intervene in favour of the people.

Implications

In the Marxist conception of analysis it is important to focus on the process by which, in the actual movement of history, reality resolves itself into new patterns and forms of existence. The analysis must be able to add to theory by grasping the essence of the new modes of social formations. Both, the Bengal and Jharkhand cases, show that there is no simple linear unfolding of nationality development. The mere presence of prior identifying marks of a nationality do not necessarily lead to national crystallisation under conditions of retarded capitalism. Nor, on the contrary, does their absence necessarily imply the impossibility of the growth of a nationalistic stir among people.

We have worked through the two cases with the assumptions that each specific case is a new combination of the general. The relations between economics and politics and culture in the two regions are evident by now. They are of crucial importance in delineating patterns of evolution; of what happens to internal ethnic variations within linguistic regions, whether ethnic categories decline or grow into ethnicity or the conditions under which formed ethnic groups transcend into trans-ethnic movements. Failure to carefully analyse them lead to reductionist conclusions. For example, one cannot say with any certainty if religious or ethnic divisions will not become a basis for nationality demands. We should rather ask: Why have many of the collective solidarities

een subsumed under nation-states now assumed a tendency to solidify as distinct political identities? We should further ask: Which of the many identities can develop towards claiming nationality status and under what conditions and with what consequences for the political unity of Third World States?

The variety of cases in the multi-national or multi-ethnic States of Asia and Africa provide us with a fertile ground to critically examine our inherited theories and advance scientific understanding. This should not be simply dismissed as an academic exercise. The left and other secular radical forces are rightly concerned with the disruptive, pro-imperialist role of religious consciousness in politics, especially in its separatist forms. It does not help to deny the possibility of a nationality consciousness emerging out of these forces and taking root in society.

I have therefore not used any definition of nation or nationality as a starting point;⁵⁹ nor have I taken a given formulation about past developments as the delineator of patterns for the future. Instead, I took the awakenings and stirring among people of nationally distinct compositions as the data for analysis and from there tried to trace patterns.

In the Third World situation, what many of our distinctions about nation or nationality express are more often present as no more than tendencies. They may go on developing through various zig-zag courses without reaching completion or maturation as was the case in the period of rising, ascendant capitalism. In the course of this zig-zag development of nationality consciousness various factors may grow as obstacles and impede or deflect the desired course of development.

Both the cases we have examined show that nationality consciousness and its organisational forms no longer necessarily follow the pattern or sequence of the earlier epoch. Stunted economic growth and retarded capitalism, factors which were of minor significance in the epoch of revolutionary capitalist transformation, have become of crucial importance in the shaping of reality.

In this era of imperialism, the more capitalism grows and expands in Third World countries, the more the possibilities of independent industrialisation recede. Retarded capitalism, which leans on surviving feudal forces and therefore also on imperialism, is incapable of developing productive forces and transforming society. For instance, social categories of an ethnic type which had always existed as non-political factors become politicised and provide the basis for divisive mobilisation. Apart from their divisive and therefore separatist impact, politics based on ethnicity constitutes a deformation because all that is ethnic represents partial worldviews. When these contend for politically autonomous status, they can have only regressive consequences. Therefore, ethnic exclusivity in whatever form claimed or with whatever zeal prosecuted cannot be a welcome development; this remains so although we recognise the illegitimacy of efforts at forced assimilation.

For understanding such forms, analogies cannot be sought from the period of ascendant capitalism. If anything can shed light from the advanced capitalist world, it

is now when capitalism is, as a world historical force, in overall retreat and in its retreat is giving re-birth to ethnicity or divisive nationality movements within those societies.

In the above context, let us for example take the very important question of the relationship of capitalism with industrialisation.⁶⁰ It has by now become a common experience of Third World countries that the more capitalism grows and expands in their societies in this era of imperialism, the possibility of independent industrialisation recedes further; 'independent' in the sense that its impulses, resources, and requirements are located within that society. This is equally true for countries like Brazil or India — the most highly industrialised in the Third World — as it is true for countries with little industry like Tanzania or Zambia. Such a statement made a 100 years ago would have sounded patently ridiculous. Not most Marxists take it as axiomatically true. Imperialism in general, but more specifically in the shape of its latest offspring, the multinational corporations (MNCs), is both the source of very rapid capitalist penetrations as well as of growing retardation and underdevelopment in the Third World.

This would obviously have far reaching consequences for our societies and thereby also equally far reaching implications for the theory on national formations. It is therefore, irrelevant to quote Marx or Lenin in an inappropriate way; for example, "the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse" may no longer necessarily be a source of "assimilation of nations" or be one that can "remove national barriers" as Lenin had observed. It cannot only be a source of underdevelopment and retardation but by allowing for the deeper penetration of imperialist forces through MNCs can also cause great bickerings and play up chauvinism and subvert national independence.⁶¹ It is therefore more important to identify and understand the new kind of relations that capitalism through retardation, even while it helps the growth of productive forces in limited spheres, engenders in the Third World and the way they mediate the evolution and development of social forms based on forces which would have been swept away by advanced capitalism.

In one way by not allowing for independent industrialisation and the transformation of capital in the sphere of accumulation into industrial capital, it can result in the perpetuation of incomplete national crystallisation because, due to the survival of pre-capitalist ideologies and backward outlook as forces dragging people⁶² conceptual unification of life-experiences into a modern world outlook is thwarted. Prolonged immaturity of nationally distinct regions has resulted in making what were historically minor factors crucial determinants leading to the articulation of national sentiments around such factors. In such conditions, deformities in the organised forms which emerge to fight for national sentiments also develop.

Such social deformations, although they have an extensive social base among the neo-literates, petty-bourgeoisie, sections of large commercial capital, are essentially rooted in the persistence of semi-feudal relations among peasantry under oppressive bourgeois conditions. The peasant question needs to be singled out as it remains of considerable importance to the national question. Both in Bengal and Jharkhand, the peasantry displayed rapid shifts in its politico-ideological postures. To ask: Whether

such shifts implied or imply, a change in the ideological moorings or the consciousness of peasantry about politics or the surrounding world, is the wrong kind of question. It leaves out a crucial feature of the peasant world under the conditions outlined above.

To ignore this feature of the peasant question in countries like India, is to end up in the kind of empiricism out of which there can be no escape except futile debate. Such a disposition in the peasantry is kept alive under conditions of stunted capitalist growth wherein the peasantry faces continuous disintegration towards the polarities and hence cannot get stabilised or dissolved as happens in ascendant capitalism.

The only circumstance that can ensure a stable shift in ideologically steadying the peasantry is the growth of enduring, independent organisations under the working class parties. In the absence of working class leadership, the opportunist vacillation of dominant peasant leadership force the peasantry from one political position or formation into another.

It is in such a situation that communalised religion can become, however disruptive for the emancipation of people, an element in the splitting up of one potential nationality and its organisation into two national States as in Bengal. Once a potential nationality is split up to form parts of two different State systems, it is obvious that the two parts tend to grow into distinct national groups. But what are the conditions under which religion can play such a role? First, only when the development of capitalism leads to a clearly distinct development of a community *vis-a-vis* another community. Secondly, when within this distinct development of communities there also takes place the growth of an emergent ruling class or classes, who then can achieve some sway over productive economy and effective political power by unifying the community under their leadership and working for the political separation of that community from other communities. Thirdly and finally, where separatism as a political tendency has taken root, that community constitutes or can become a majority in a contiguous region. The absence of any one of these conditions can be the cause of communalism or ethnicity which can hinder the political and cultural unification of nationality groups; it cannot, however, result in political separatism even if it feeds separatist forces elsewhere. In general, such differences or divisions provide a basis for social sub-stratifications within a given class structure. When this is so, class relations or conflicts *per se* are not altered but, under the impact of crisis situations, political deflections can occur with wide repercussions for class struggle; class conflict can indeed assume the most reactionary forms. It is here that the relative strength of various political formations in society becomes important. But even if all the conditions are present, but radical forces are powerful enough to decisively intervene, then alternative outcomes are more likely, as could have been the case if the left forces were as powerful in Bengal at that time as they are today.

Under this kind of retarded capitalism controlled by imperialism in varying degrees, "the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse" cannot assimilate the various ethnic groups into the adjacent more developed nationalities with which they have had natural affinities as is the case with Jharkhand *vis-a-vis* the States within which it is located. The freedom of intercourse under such a capitalism has resulted on the contrary in bypassing them completely of all the gains of the development of

productive forces. The widespread feeling of suffocation across ethnic lines has been having the two-fold effect of breaking down the traditional boundaries between these ethnic groups and on the other of pushing them farther away from the dominant nationality group within which they are located.

It is the absence, common to all the ethnic groups within Jharkhand, of ruling classes (bourgeoisie included), or even a substantial middle class which has allowed the collapse of the boundaries that divided them as ethnic groups, rather than as distinct ethnic groups. Even in the absence of the bourgeoisie, considered a necessary force for taking up the banner of nationality consciousness, the very disintegration and dislocations in their social and economic life and the common feelings of oppression at the hands of outside forces and State power under bourgeois conditions can act as the accelerator of nationality consciousness for groups enclosed within larger nationalities.

The historical roles of the bourgeoisie or the causal chains emanating from the market are no longer of the same historical or social consequence in the national question under contemporary capitalism in the Third World, but then to work these out would require an even more extended presentation than has been attempted in these pages.

Notes

1. See Javeed Alam, "Dialectics of Capitalist Transformation and National Crystallisation: The Past and Present of the National Question in India," in Economic and Political Weekly, Political Economy Supplement, 29 January 1983, subsequently published in D.N. Panigrahi (ed.) Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India, New Delhi, 1985; Iqbal Khan (ed.) Fresh Perspective on India and Pakistan, Oxford, 1985 and T.D.S.S. (Compilation) Nationality Question in India, Pune, 1987; See also Javeed Alam, "Political Articulation of Mass Consciousness in Present Day India," in Rasheeduddin Khan, S.N Jha, and Zoya Khaliq, (eds.) The State, Political Processes and Identity: Reflections on Modern India, Sage, Delhi, 1989.
2. Col. B.T. Dalton, Tribal History of Eastern India, Cosmos, Delhi: 1973; B.K. Roy-Burman, among many others, see his "Tribal Demography," in K.S. Singh, (ed.) Tribal Situation in India, Simla, 1971 and "Classification of the Tribals for the Development of an Integrated Tribal Policy," Inter-Discipline, Special No.1978. L.P. Vidyarthi, Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar, Calcutta, 1964. Surajit Sinha, "Tribal-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continuum in Central India," Man in India, 16, 2, 1965. G.S. Ghurye, The Scheduled Tribes, Bombay, 1963; Nirmal Sen Gupta, (ed.), Fourth World Dynamics: Jharkhand, Authors Guild Publication, Delhi, 1982.
3. Most of the indigenous people who have not been listed as Scheduled Tribes as for example, the Kurmi-Mahato peasantry, have an economic life which is more or less similar to the main listed tribes in this region. Although said to be slightly better cultivators they are educationally and socially as 'backward' as the others and no less poor. None of them are in the IAS or IPS or IFS, etc. or even in the higher levels of civil or judicial service. See Nirmal Sen Gupta, op. cit. Ritually also they form a 'drinking cluster' with the tribals and as is the case with tribals they do not accept food from the Brahmins, See Risley, Census of India, 1891, XVI (I). In the 1920's they were also listed as a Scheduled Tribe and were excluded only from 1931 when Hinduisation became among them very strong and all of them declared themselves to be Hindus. Now once again there is a strong move among them to get listed as Scheduled Tribes and there is also a counter-culture movement away from Hinduism as reflected in the Gossaiyan movement.

In 1978, the Kurmi Sabha submitted a memorandum to the Secretary, Lok Sabha, for inclusion of the Kurmis of Jharkhand in the Scheduled Tribe list when the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Amendment) Bill 1978, was to be discussed. According to this memorandum they now number 4.5 million in this region.

4. About the Momin (Muslim—weavers) of the region, W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, had noted that "they are held by the Zamindars as fief-holders for quasi-feudal services." (p.319). Their position according to Nirmal Sen Gupta, Fourth World Dynamics, *op. cit.* has not changed much, although legally they are no longer enserved.
5. N.K. Bose, Some Indian Problems, Calcutta, 1972, see especially Ch.12 "National Integration and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes," See also his Culture and Society in India and Tribal Life in India, New Delhi, 1979.
6. G.S. Ghurye, The Scheduled Tribes, *op. cit.*
7. This is something which has been noted by a number of writers. For instance, B.K. Roy Burman has pointed out this process in a number of his studies over a long period of time. See his: "Basic Concepts of Tribal Welfare and Integration," in L.P. Vidyarthi, Anthropology in Action, 1960. "Some Dimensions of Transformation of Tribal Societies," Journal of Social Research XI, I, 1968; "Social Political Processes in India and Integration of Social Anthropology," paper read at a seminar on Urgent Problems of Social Anthropology, at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Simla held in 1969; "Ethnicity and National Questions in India with Special Reference to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes," in S.A.H. Haggi, Democracy: Pluralism and Nation-Building, Delhi, 1984; See also F.G. Bailey, "Political Change in Kondmals," in K.S. Mathur, and B.C. Aggarwal, (eds.) Tribes, Caste and Peasantry, Lucknow, 1974 or the detailed study of Santals by Martin Orans, The Santal: A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition, Detroit, 1968.
Students of tribal regions seem to agree that the earlier trend of assimilation (or emulation of) with Hindu caste society has given way to a trans-ethnic consolidation of people living under oppression in these regions.
8. W.W. Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal, Reprint: Calcutta, 1965, observes about the Titu Mir peasant uprising: "In the peasant uprising around Calcutta in 1831, they broke into the houses of Musalman and Hindu landlords with perfect impartiality." A.F. Salauddin Ahmad, "Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century," in Barun De, (ed.) Essay in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar, New Delhi, 1976, observes that there is no evidence of any well off Muslims supporting these peasant revolts.
9. Raja, autonomous chieftain; a kind of sovereign over a principality. Unlike other landed classes in India, patrimony is not shared but inherited by one son only.
10. For such characterising of tribal revolts, see for instance, Stephen Fuch's, oft quoted book, Rebellious Prophets, Bombay, 1965. For another view see Kathleen Gough, "Indian Peasant Uprising," Economic and Political Weekly (hence forth EPW) Special No., August 1974; for a third type of characterisation, R.R. Diwakar, Bihar Through the Ages, New Delhi, 1959. Some have found the tribal peasants revolts in face of deprivations of the colonial State as 'regressive Utopia', see Hans Georg Hrach, "Regulated Anarchy to Proto-Nationalism: The Case of Santals," in Aspects of Tribal Life in South Asia: Strategy and Survival, Berno, 1978.
11. K.L. Sharma, "Jharkhand Movement in Bihar," EPW, 10 June 1976. My position, in certain respects, has a lot in common with Sharma's.
12. For a good account of the evolution of politics in this region see K.L. Sharma, "Jharkhand Movement in Bihar," *op. cit.*, and S. Jha, "Tribal Leadership in Bihar," EPW, III, 15 April, 13, 1968. See also P Vidyarthi, The Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar, Allahabad, 1976.
13. In 1930 a memorandum was submitted by a delegation of the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj. In 1955 too, the Jharkhand Party submitted a memorandum before the States Reorganisation Commission asking for a State with the slogan "Jharkhand Alg Prant" when big demonstrations of support were held in both, Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas.
14. Zamindar, a generic term for the holder of superior right in land but (juridically) an intermediary who collects land revenue on behalf of the government.

15. These figures are taken from Najmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, New Delhi, 1980 and W.K. Firminger, Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report (1917), Calcutta, 1962, for a discussion of diwani lands; See N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, and also for Mrushid Quli Khan's policy of encouraging the formation of large Zamindaris, p.17. James Grant calculated from Ausil Jumma of 1728 and Jamma Kool of 1763 that of a total of 139 such Zamindaris (Smaller Zamindaris means those paying a revenue of less than Rs. 100,000 or holding land equivalent to that), 25 could not be located in terms of holder's religious community. Of the remaining 114, Muslims were 46 (40 per cent) and Hindus 68 (60 per cent); See James Grant's Analysis in the Fifth Report, 1812, Edited by W.K. Firminger, 1917.
16. Talukdar, (in Bengal) a subordinate tenure granted by a Zamindar as a contract for collecting revenue on his behalf; an inferior intermediary.
N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, Vol.1 Calcutta, 1961, p.4, see also Vol.2, Ch.2, Calcutta, 1962.
17. Jagirdar, under Muslim kings, a revenue assignment (jagir) in lieu of salary for a stated term normally not exceeding 3 years to a servant of the State. Duties included maintenance of the Cavalry and certain powers of administration.
These figures are taken from Najmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, *op. cit.* For the difference between the Zamindars and Jagirdars in Bengal see Firminger, Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report, Reprint, Calcutta, 1962, see also Anil Chandra Banerjee, The Agrarian System of Bengal, Vol. I, 1782-1793, Calcutta, 1982. Firminger *op. cit.* also discusses pp.46-49 the reasons for the predominance of Hindus as Zamindars. See also J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal: The Muslim Period 1200-1757, Dacca University, 1948, Reprint Patna 1973, and N.K. Sinha, Economic History of Bengal, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, pp.3-4.
18. Foudjar, a subordinate military official entrusted with functions of maintaining law and order in his jurisdiction. Sometimes also assisted the jagirdar in collecting revenue.
19. Darogar, a kind of police superintendency over a village or town, custom or excise out-post.
20. From an analysis of the monthly pay of servants at the Nizamat Circas for the year 1774, Najmul Karim has worked out that barring 261 (19%) Hindus out of a total 1605 servants, all the rest were Muslims. See his Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, *op. cit.*
21. Jadunath Sarkar, (ed.) History of Bengal, *op. cit.*, Salauddin Ahmad, "Muslim Thought and Leadership.," *op. cit.*, Najmul Karim, *op. cit.*
22. The decline was very rapid after that. For example, between 1852-1868, out of 241 natives admitted as pleaders there was only one Muslim. Indian Musلمان, W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p.160. In the Executive Services in Bengal, i.e. Deputy Magistrate and Sub Deputy Magistrate out of a total 399 in the year 1886, there were only 44 Muslims. For the same year in the Judicial Services - Subordinate Judge and Munsif - out of a total of 623 there were only 52 Muslims. If all other departments such as Home or Controller General or Office of Secretary to Government of Bengal, etc. are considered the position was no better. See Report of the Public Service Commission, 1887, quoted in Najmul Karim, *op. cit.*, pp.193-96.
23. Ashrafs, elites privileged individuals (in Indian Muslim society) who have established claims over vantage positions in society.
24. Atrafs, commoners, ordinary people.
25. The Report of Mr Pedler, DPI, Government of Bengal. The increase in the number of pupils belonging to the Muslim community was 11.6 per cent as against 6.3 per cent for Hindu pupils. See also the Census of India, 1911, Vol. 5. Part 1.
From around this time onwards one also notices an important change in the outlook of the Bengali Muslims. There is no longer an insistence on the teaching of Arabic/Persian in schools. On the contrary, one finds that the knowledge of these languages is no longer regarded as necessary for social respectability and acceptance. This was an important change. Furthermore, there is a ready acceptance of secular education and no hankering for some degree of religious content in education. Instead, we find an insistence on the learning of Bengali as the mother tongue and a sense of disgust at some leaders not knowing Bengali.

26. Bhadrak, (in Bengal) 'gentlemen' but more generally people with accomplishment; (high) culture and status; the social stratum that emerged during the colonial period (mainly among Hindus) which monopolised positions and power within the 'native' society.
27. The character, leadership and social roots of this awakening is clearly revealed in the formation of the Mohamedan Literary and Scientific Society founded by Abdul Latif and the National Muhammadan Association of Calcutta by Syed Amir Ali. Both these 'gentlemen' claimed Arab/Persian descent, were from Urdu speaking background and knew no Bengali. For details see M.M. Ali, Autobiography and Other Writings of Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahdur, Chittagong, 1968 and K.K. Aziz (ed.) Ameer Ali: His Life and Work, Lahore, 1968. To understand the differences in the character and outlook of these organisation see Salauddin Ahmed, "Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal...," *op.cit.* The alien elitism of these Muslim representatives is also seen in the type of Muslims recognised by the government; all the 12 Muslims nominated to the Legislative Council between 1862–1892 claimed foreign descent. But by the turn of the century, resentment started growing against these people, e.g. Yoquinndin Ahmed writing in the Muslim Chronicle (11 April 1986), complained that Muslims of Bengal have leaders who do their utmost to belong to the North–West. There were also at this time strong pleas for the adoption of Bengali as the mother tongue, see Pradeep Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal, *op. cit.*, esp. Ch. II.
28. Take for instance the question of education and the Muslim demands for facilities. Amalendu De, "Roots of Separatism in 19th Century Bengal," in Barun De, *op. cit.*, catalogues the reactions of the enlightened Hindu elites. On the reactions of the Hindu elite to the demands for the establishment of a University at Dacca, M.S.M Khan, "A Chapter in the Muslim Struggle for Freedom: Establishment of Dacca University," Dacca University Studies, Vol. XVI, June 1968.
29. See Amalendu De, "Roots of Separation in 19th Century Bengal," in Barun De, *op. cit.*
30. Rafiuddin Ahmad, The Bengal Muslims, 1871–1906: A Quest for Identity, New Delhi, 1981, is the most recent and comprehensive work on this.
31. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, Caste and Politics in Eastern Bengal: The Namasudras and Anti-Partition Politics, 1905–1911, Occasional Paper, Mimeo, Centre for South East Asia Studies, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1981.
32. W. E. Cotton, Handbook of Commercial Information, Calcutta: 1924.
33. Amiya K. Bagchi, Private Investment in India, 1900–1939, Cambridge, 1972.
34. Report of Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee (1922–1930) Calcutta, 1939, Vol.1, p.198, also pp.69–70 for its extent, pp.73–74 for per family average, see also M.Azizul Haque, The Man Behind the Plough, 1939, New Print, Dacca, 1980.
35. For details of this, see Sunil Sen, Agrarian Relations in India 1793–1947, New Delhi, 1979, p.55. Ashok Sen Partha Chatterjee and Saugata Mukherjee, Perspectives in Social Sciences 2. Three Studies on the Agrarian Structure in Bengal, Calcutta, 1982.
36. Ashok Mitra, "Fifteen Decades of Agrarian Change in Bengal," in Barun De, *op. cit.*, Benoy Chaudhuri, "Land Market in Eastern India: 1793–1940," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, April–June, 1975; Also his "The Process of De–Peasantisation in Bengal and Bihar," Indian Historical Review, July 1975; Bhowani Sen, Evolution of Agrarian Relations in India, New Delhi, 1962; Sunil Sen, Agrarian Relations in India, *op. cit.*, Ashok Sen, (et al.) Perspectives in Social Sciences, *op. cit.*
37. A good, brief account of how this trend developed and dissipated itself and the extent to which Fazal ul Haq personified it is available in Humaira Momen, Muslim Politics in Bengal: A Study of Krishak Praja Party and the Election of 1937, Dacca; See also Sheila Sen, Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937–1949, New Delhi, 1976.
38. There are nine dialect languages currently in the Jharkhand region Kurukh, Santhali, Mundari, Kurmali, Ho, Nagpuri, Khadia, Khota and Panchpergania. Recently two scripts have been developed to write them, Ol Chiti invented by the Santali scholar (late) Raghunath Murmu and Oarong Chiti invented by the Ho Scholar (late) Lako Badra of Jhinkpani, Kolhan.
39. I owe the realisation of the theoretical implications of this to my physicist friend, Jogin Sen Gupta, who after giving up physics now lives and works among the people of this region.

40. Jharkhand region — Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas together — make up only 2.5 per cent of the geographical area of the Indian State, but 25 per cent of the total mineral production is concentrated in this region.
41. Khalasis, daily paid, manual labour lacking in job security; work covers a wide range from carrying head loads, clearing up work areas to running errands.
42. Figures vary. This number has been given by A.K. Roy in his telegram to the concerned ministry. Quoted in Nirmal Sen Gupta "Class and Tribe in Jharkhand," *EPW*, April 5 1980. See also his Destitutes and Development: A Study of Bauri Community in Bokaro Region, New Delhi, 1978.
43. This figure is a rough approximation. It has been arrived at by adding up the population of Scheduled Tribes and Castes, Kurmis, Momins, etc. and the blue collar workers. The remaining are treated as immigrants who monopolise positions of importance.
44. Annual Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1975; See also the Report of Planning Commission entitled, Report of the Task Force on Development of Tribal Areas, 1973, Mimeo, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
45. The forced nature of participation among the tribals is revealed in a number of ways; economically active proportion among the tribals is 57 per cent as against 45 per cent among the general population, proportion of males to females among tribals is 5:1 as against 3:1 among the general population; most of the tribal work force is in the primary sector, 91 per cent as compared to the general average of 73 per cent. See Census of India, 1971: Special Tables for Scheduled Tribes, 93, vol. 1, pl. 5a. Interestingly out of a total of 400 occupations listed in the 'code of occupation' by the census organisation only 69 were found to be existing among the tribals in Santal Parganas, of this region; See Roy Burman, "Tribal Demography," in K.S. Singh, (ed.), *op. cit.*
46. N.Y. Naidu, "Pains of Industrialisation," *EPW*, June 5, 1976; M.L. Patel, Changing Land Problem of Tribal India, Bhopal, 1974; L.P. Vidyarthi, Socio-Cultural Implications of Industrialisation in India: A Case Study of Tribal Bihar, Research Programme Committee, Planning Commission, Delhi, 1970; S.P. Sinha, The Problem of Land Alienation of Tribals In and Around Ranchi (1955- 1965), Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi, 1968.
47. B.K. Roy Burman, Social Processes in the Wake of Industrialisation, Rourkela, Census of India Publication, 1961.
48. The appeals of different political parties and formations and their modes of mobilisation clearly reflect this pattern. See L.P. Vaidyarthi, Dynamics of Tribal Leadership, *op. cit.*, Ch. vi, vii; Sachchidananda, The Changing Munda, *op. cit.*
49. After the split in the Jharkhand Party in the wake of merger with the Congress Party in 1963, the Jharkhand Party first split into anti-merger and pro-merger groups. Since then a number of groups have emerged; viz., Jharkhand Prant Dal, Hul Jharkhand, Progressive Hul Jharkhand, Prantiya Jharkhand, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, etc. In addition there are a number of other groups like Birsa Seva Dal, Adivasi Seva Dal, Chotanagpur Plateau Praja Parishad, Adivasi Maha Sabha, Adivasi Vikas Parishad, which do not contest elections, but are aligned with the various political parties or act as the front organisations for some of these. These cover a wide ideological spectrum.
50. Xavier Institute of Social Service, Ranchi, had carried out a project on tribal entrepreneurship. Quoted in Sachchidananda, The Changing Munda, New Delhi, 1981 and the author agrees with these findings.
51. According to the 'Official' classification, as defined under Marginal Farmers Agricultural Land Agency, out of these 95.9 per cent 'small' farmers make up 57.4 per cent and the remaining 28.5 per cent are marginal. The rest, except those owning above 25 acres, are considered as viable. See the All India Debt and Investment Survey 1971-72, New Delhi.
52. The figures for 1960 has been taken from L.P. Vidyarthi, Cultural Counters of Tribal Bihar, Calcutta, 1964.
53. W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-55.
54. *ibid.*
55. *ibid.*
56. K. Suresh Singh "Famine, Scarcity and Economic Development in Tribal Areas," in K.Suresh Singh (ed.), Tribal Situation in India, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-95, has calculated that of 199 districts with sizeable

- tribal population only 19 districts lie in drought free zone of assured irrigation. Of these 180 drought prone districts only 46 lie in drought prone areas and the remaining 134 districts are in the extreme drought areas. He also says that if famine is episodic, severe scarcity is a recurring condition. See also R. Saxena, Tribal Economy in Central India, Calcutta, 1964.
57. A good, summarised account of the State laws relating to forest and their implications for the Tribals is available in Steva Jones, op. cit. In the text I have merely touched upon the importance of forests for the tribals in the most general way. The importance of the forests significantly vary from tribe to tribe. It has been estimated that with Bihor and Maler-forest dwelling tribes, the dependence on forests is as high as 90 per cent of their needs, whereas for Munda and Oraon tribes it is around 45 per cent of their needs. See L.P. Vidyarthi, "Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development," in Buddbadeb Chaudhuri, (ed.) Tribal Development in India, Calcutta, 1982. The impact of forest laws also varies significantly. Some are being starved into extinction; See L.P. Vidyarthi, "The Vanishing and Primitive Tribes of Bihar," Journal of Social Research, XX, 2, 1977.
 58. Sunil Sen Gupta, (with R.N. Prasad,) Santal Rural Economy: A Study Based on Village Survey in Santal Parganas, Agro Economic Research Centre, Viswa-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1973, in a detailed house to house survey has also come to the same conclusion.
 59. In my earlier article "Dialectics of Capitalist Transformations and National Crystallisation: The Past and Present of the National Question in India," op. cit., I made a mistake in not distinguishing them as stages of development on the continuum of national crystallisation. From the position, which I still hold, that these distinctions are no longer of much use in correctly understanding the nature of national movements or the people in the grip of a ferment that has national features to it, I went into the logically untenable position of denying the historical distinction altogether.
 60. As an aside, Ernest Gellner, one of the most profound and comprehensive non-Marxist thinkers on the problem of nationalism in his most recent work Nations and Nationalism, Oxford, 1984, has worked out in detail why he considers modern nations and the phenomenon of nationalism to be the creations of industrialisation and not capitalism in general. He uses this as one of the criterion to develop an alternative theory to that of Marxists on this problem. His work should be taken more seriously by the Marxists. It seems to me that in working out a detailed critique of this work, especially in relation to Third World countries, the Marxist theory itself, on the national question, can come to terms more fully with the complex realities of the present times.
 61. It is important to note here that Marxists in general and the left movement in the country in particular have clearly and consistently pointed to the danger of collaboration with imperialism and have given correct slogans to fight it. But it seems that this realisation is largely confined to the plane of ideological struggle. The full implications of unrestricted capitalist intercourse have not been, it again seems to me, properly integrated in the theory on the national question.
 62. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, in his rejoinder, "The Indian National Question: Need for Deeper Study," Social Scientist, No. 115, December 1982, to Amalendu Guha's "The Indian National Question: A Conceptual Frame," EPW, Vol. 17 Review of Political Economy, 31 July 1982, has raised the very important point that for the full development of nationalities the transformation of the emerging forms of commercial capital into industrial capital is a necessary condition. But what if industrial capital emerges under the colonial tutelage and modern industry grows only as enclaves as it happened in India and is later hampered in its full development by imperialism as it is now, then what would be the consequences on the evolution of nationalities? Further, if, as Namboodiripad correctly points out, none of the major classes, the bourgeoisie and proletariat, could shake off the pre-capitalist mode of thinking which dragged everybody into it, then whether and how far can the capitalist forces negate the characteristics that define nation-nationalities and the concrete popular expression of that consciousness. These questions are logically present in the very insightful posers in Namboodiripad's article. These need to be gone into and integrated into theory for a clear understanding of situations in the Third World. We are caught up in ugly and deformed social forms of development which benefit none but the imperialist interest and therefore cannot be avoided. I have tried to take the first tentative steps in full awareness that there is enormous scope to go wrong in the analysis of social situations.

4

Ethnic self-determination and separatist movements in Southeast Asia

*Teresa S. Encarnacion and Eduardo C. Tadem**

The consolidation of diverse ethnic groups in Southeast Asia under their respective central governments is one of the more formidable challenges confronting efforts at nation-building in the region. The desired goal is the creation of a State where “collectivities of individuals who feel a sense of belonging based on cultural traits which are usually some combination of religion, language and social mores and a notion of common ancestry” are to be imbued with a strong sense of national identification.¹

There is no problem with this purpose as far as the dominant ethnic group of a country is concerned. But the minority and other dominated groups are often at a disadvantage under the arrangement and find themselves being made to conform with the requirements of the ruling ethnic majority or of its narrow elite component. In some cases, the dominant group does not even comprise a majority of the population of the concerned nation.

And so it happens, that the other ethnic groups, in order to preserve their identities as distinct peoples, espouse interests and values contrary to those of central governments and the dominant elite classes. Issues such as the conflict between central and tribal legal systems, the preservation and development of indigenous cultures, and the utilisation and control of natural resources, among others, have been long-standing problem areas. When compromises are deemed impossible, separatist movements arise. In such a situation,

“ethnic groups seek to secede or gain autonomy from the control, *de facto* and *de jure*, of a given State. More often than not, the use of force is utilized, i.e.,

* The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ms. Melissa Hubahib, who did most of the data gathering for this paper.

acts of revolutionary violence, to express rejection of the prevailing political and social system and the determination to bring about progressive changes by overthrowing the system.”²

The issue of separatism is a reality that cannot be ignored in understanding the political economy of Southeast Asian countries. More important, political and economic development can only proceed unhampered and alternatives to regional development in the region can only be rendered feasible if the issues raised by separatist movements are properly addressed.

This chapter examines armed separatist movements in four Southeast Asian countries – Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. The first part looks into the contexts which gave rise to these movements and the goals which they pursue as well as their relative strengths and composition. The second part analyses the problems and issues which emerge from the separatist struggles, for instance, cooptation into the power structures or outright State repression.

This study thus attempts to clarify concepts of separatist movements in particular and popular movements in general in Southeast Asia and to identify parallelisms and divergencies in the region. Finally, it lays down the bases for the development of alternatives to address ethnic-based concerns and issues.

The colonial and post-colonial context

During the pre-colonial period in Southeast Asia, there already existed problems with regard to the question of integrating minority or dominated ethnic communities under the governance of a ruling group. Nation-states as we now know them did not exist then. Various kingdoms flourished and when acquiring enough wealth and military power, brought other ethnic peoples or less powerful or declining kingdoms under their suzerainty. In either case, the paying of tribute and other subservient practices were imposed, which were sources of internal tension often contributing to political instability and sparking attempts at separation.

But separatism assumed larger and more severe proportions during the colonial period given the attempt by Western colonisers to integrate subjugated economies into the international market. An important prerequisite for this was the establishment of a central government directly or indirectly controlled by the colonial power. With few exceptions, indigenous leaders who could politically facilitate the exploitation of natural resources and human labour were co-opted and integrated into the colonial bureaucracy.

Bringing together the diverse ethnic peoples into clearly delineated nations, each ruled by a central administration, was to prove a near-impossible task. In Southeast Asia alone, there are at least 32 major ethno-linguistic groups and the region hosts all the world's major belief systems – Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and later Christianity.³ Furthermore, the carving up of Southeast Asia also resulted in arbitrarily and callously

established national boundaries with no regard for the identity and integrity of ethnic groups. Thus after colonial partitioning, and especially in mainland Southeast Asia, a particular ethnic group would find itself straddling two or more 'national boundaries'. Whenever convenient, the colonial policy of 'divide and rule' was employed.

Given these circumstances, the goal of central governments of integrating their respective ethnic groups "politically, socially, and economically through a downward exertion of State nationalism as well as to assimilate or transform these multifarious ethnic identities into one national identity espoused by the central government was more often than not rendered a futile scheme."⁴

The post-colonial period also saw the central governments complementing this policy with other strategies such as: emphasising a centre-oriented resource allocation; perpetuating a centre-oriented administrative system whereby the government exerts (centralised) control over all other parts of the country including the peripheral areas inhabited by ethnic groups without further attempts at integrating assimilation, i.e., allowing for internal political imperialism; and advocating regional or local autonomy which aims at allowing peripheral areas to look after their own affairs and to participate in the decision-making at the centre in accordance with previously-defined rules and procedures.⁵

This did not go down well with those groups who did not see themselves as part of the nation and who felt strongly about the erosion of their self-identity and the perceived violation of their political and economic rights. Thus the continued rise of separatist movements in Southeast Asia.

The Burmese case

There are at present organised rebel groups in 12 population areas (not counting the Chinese) in Burma that identify themselves by some ethnic or regional design.⁶ The more active ones are found among the Karen and Shan communities. The Karens found expression for their cause in the creation of the Karen National Union (KNU) formed after Burma won its independence from Britain in 1947.

The KNU's objective was to create a federal republic based on parliamentary democracy and which grants equal rights to all nationalities. Together with the Mons, the Karens advocated that this proposed federation be composed of seven States, one each for the Burmese, Shans, Karens, Mons, Chins, and Arakanese. The KNU later created the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) to press for separation from Burma. Another organisation formed among the Karens was the Karenni United Liberation Front (KPULF), whose objective is to obtain autonomy within the Burmese Union. It also aims to establish what it calls a 'people's democracy' leading to a Marxist form of socialism.⁷

The Kachins also established their own organisation, known as the Kachin Independent Organisation (KIO) in 1961. Its goal is the creation of a Kachin State that

is independent of Burma. A year after the establishment of the KIO, the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) was set up after the *coup d'état* staged by Gen. Ne Win. Through the SSPP, the Shans sought to preserve their political rights and cultural identity.

These non-Burmese groups are particularly concerned with their rights of self-identification and a need for a large degree of autonomy for their region or nationality. Ideological considerations are not primary motivations, as distinguished, for example, from the aims of the Burmese Communist Party (BCP).

Even during the pre-colonial period, fighting among the ethnic groups in Burma was triggered off by the attempts of the Burmese monarchy to suppress the non-Burmese nationalities, control the peoples under its reign, expropriate the economic surplus, and secure access to trade and invasion routes. These actions were rationalised within the context of the Buddhist concept of the Burmese king as '*cakravartin*' — the universal ruler who would usher in a new religious era.⁸ From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the monarchy was successful in its efforts. The Shans became the monarchs' vassals, thus allowing the incorporation of the Shan system into the Burmese order. Such a relationship, however, was not established with the more fiercely resilient Karens. Prior to the advent of British colonialism, lowland Burmese troops frequently raided animist Karen hill tribes and fostered years of racial antagonism.⁹

Under the British, the non-Burmese remained relatively autonomous, particularly from the Burmese. A semi-autonomous Shan State actually came into being in 1922, composed of all the ruling Shan princes, and the British government in Rangoon served as the governing body common to all principalities. A period of relative peace reigned.¹⁰ Likewise among the other ethnic groups — the Chin, Kachin, and Kayah (Karenni) areas and the Karen Salween district were administered by the British through indirect rule, thus maintaining local power structures in place.¹¹ The British found it more practical to allow the non-Burmese to consolidate themselves separately from the Burmese. It was also a convenient colonial tactic to avert any united action by any or all of the ethnic groups against the British.

The Burmese kingship had been replaced by the British colonial government. The degradation of this once powerful monarchy had severe negative consequences for it. As the colony moved towards independence after the Second World War, the non-Burmese ethnic groups had virtually severed their ties of vassalage to the Burmese and lost all sense of nationhood with the latter. Military encounters heightened the long held animosity between the Karens and the Burmese. The Christianised Karens had fought against the Burmese in the series of Anglo-Burmese wars and supported the Japanese against their traditional enemies during the War.¹² However, their appeals to London for separation from Burma went unheeded. This led to the formation of KNU and KNDO and the launching of the rebellion to press for autonomy in 1949.

The open rebellion highlighted the weakness of the Burmese government in consolidating the country in the midst of an anti-British struggle to achieve legitimacy,

nationhood and identity. Other non-Burmese ethnic groups took advantage of the post-war negotiations for Burmese independence by holding the First Panglong Conference during which the Supreme Council of the United Hill Peoples was created. This was in order to strengthen their bargaining power with the Burmese government. In the Second Panglong Conference in 1947, the Council decided to co-operate with the interim Burmese government in exchange for a guarantee that it had the right to secede from the Union after 10 years (or after 1958), should the arrangement prove to be unsatisfactory. These agreements were embodied in the historic Panglong Pact. It is important to note that the Karens, who had already opted for armed struggle, were not a party to this agreement.¹³ But in 1958, the central government violated the Panglong Pact by refusing to recognise the Shan leaders' right to secession.

The ethnic insurrections continue to the present. Although they offer no immediate threat to the Union, neither does the central government have the resources or the moral authority to completely stamp out these rebellions. As of 1983, the rebel groups still count on a considerable number of combatants and mass support.¹⁴ The KNU, for example, is still 3,500 to 4,000-strong. Its military arm, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), is said to be 10,000 to 15,000-strong. Less significant is the Marxist-led KPULF, with a reported core of 70 men, 60 of whom are cadres on loan from the Burmese Communist Party. In this manner, the BCP tries to insinuate itself as a force within the ethnic struggles. Another sizeable army is that of the Kachin Independent Organisation (KIO), which has a strength of 5,000 men while its armed group, the Karen Independent Army (KIA), has 3,000 to 4,000 men. The Shan State Army (SSA), on the other hand, has a reported force of 2,000 to 3,000 men and a reserve force of 5,000.

Indonesian secessionist movements

Regional rebellion in Indonesia is characterised in two ways. In the first type, the central government is challenged merely at the regional level with no attempt at seceding from the nation-state. Thus these movements, although considering themselves national in scope, retain the word 'Indonesia' in the name of their organisations. The second type, on the other hand, stress their distinction from Indonesia, in general by proclaiming the independence of their regions from the republic.¹⁵

Examples of the first type are the Darul Islam insurgencies in West Java which began in 1947 and in South Sulawesi in 1950, and the Pemerintah Revolutioner Republik Indonesia (PRRI, or Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) in Sumatra and North Sulawesi in 1958.¹⁶

Most of the separatist movements in Indonesia, however, fall under the second category. The Free Papua Organisation (OPM) was formed during the country's decolonisation process. The OPM's struggle is based in Irian Jaya, formerly West New

Guinea (the other half of the island of New Guinea) which was administered during the colonial period by the Netherlands East Indies Co., through the sultanates of Ternate, Tidore, and Batjan. Its Melanesian culture is completely distinct from the Javanese way of life which dominates Indonesian society. Irian Jaya was annexed by Indonesia in 1945, when President Soekarno claimed the island as part of his country, prior to the declaration of Indonesian independence. The Irianese are estimated to number about 12 million. The OPM, operating under a fiercely repressive political atmosphere, number 700 to 1,000 activists with a hard core of 200.¹⁷ The leadership is composed of intellectuals opposed to Javanese domination over their people. Thus, the OPM seeks separation and independence from the Republic of Indonesia.

Another group is the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The GAM was inaugurated on 4 December 1976, when its president, Hassan Muhammed Tiro (grandson of famous Aceh War hero, Teungku Chik di Tiro), who had been living in New York since the early 1950s, returned home to Aceh and North Sumatra in 1976. He decided to form the GAM together with several old and young *ulamas* (Muslim teacher-priests), particularly those who had been involved in the Darul Islam movement, whose main objective was the creation of an independent Islamic republic underlining both ethnicity and regionalism. The group's political base was the urban proletariat. Like the OPM, its main grievance is directed at Javanese domination.¹⁸

A third separatist movement was the South Moluccan Republic (RMS) formed in 1950. Like the Darul Islam, it originated in the decolonisation process and was anti-Javanese in orientation. The core group was composed of colonial troops and colonial civil servants who emphasised their ethnic specificity and regionalism.¹⁹

A fourth movement, and one which has attracted considerable international attention, is the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN), situated in the former Portuguese colony. The group was organised in 1974, shortly after Portugal announced its intention to pull out of East Timor. But previously, the Indonesian government, which had long held the western part of the island, had laid claim to its eastern portion.

FRETILIN's objective is to establish an independent East Timor under a democratic government. Specifically, it is committed to the achievement of social and economic equality and a foreign policy of non-alignment. Initially, it was a moderate group advocating complete and immediate independence from Portugal. Upon the annexation by Indonesia, however, FRETILIN turned into a radical organisation which launched an armed guerilla war against the new colonisers. Its membership included young Lisbon-educated intellectuals and elements of the Portuguese-trained colonial armed force.

Two other political organisations formed at the same time as FRETILIN were the East Timor Democratic Union (UDT) and the Timorese Democratic People's Association (APODETI). UDT is an offshoot of the pro-independence efforts of the former colonial administrative class and was initially the most influential of the three, but its reluctance to press for independence and its inability to articulate its

programme led it to lose its mass support to FRETILIN. As for APODETI, its conservative social base made it an ideal Jakarta ally and it was chosen to form the pro-Suharto East Timorese government after the 1975 invasion.

Faced with an impending Indonesian invasion, the 3,000-strong FRETILIN unilaterally declared the independence of East Timor in 1975. At that time, it had the support of 60 per cent of the population and had a wide political network.²⁰ At the moment, with East Timor firmly under Indonesian control, the organisation's activities have been scaled down although it maintains a presence at the United Nations General Assembly. Amnesty International, in its 1987 report, identifies East Timor as an area with a high incidence of human rights violations committed by a national government.

Muslim secession in the Philippines

Among the more than 100 ethnic groups in the Philippines, the Muslims, who are concentrated in the southern islands, have proven to be the most resistant to integration and assimilation. The Moros (a pejorative term coined by Spanish colonisers but now adopted proudly by Muslim militants), comprise about 23 per cent of the population of the southern Philippines (Mindanao and Sulu) or about six per cent of the national total. They alone comprise 13 ethno-linguistic groups, with the three major ones being the Tausugs, Maranaos, and Maguindanaos.²¹ The three are also the most active in the secessionist movement.

The Muslim separatists contend that their nation has been forcibly incorporated into a politico-economic system dominated by foreign capitalists and their Filipino counterparts.²² They regard the Manila government's rule as 'Filipino colonialism'. Led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the goal is to establish a Moro republic that would include Muslims, Christians, and other religious and ethno-linguistic groups of the southern Philippines.

As early as the period of Spanish colonialism, Muslim independence has always been an issue. The Spaniards, upon conquering the northern part of the archipelago, unsuccessfully attempted to extend their political and economic domination over the southern part and convert to Christianity its Muslim population. The Americans continued the attempts with resettlement projects for Christians from the north, new legal systems, education, tax structures, and other bureaucratic measures to integrate Muslim areas under the central government. Military force was also liberally employed and unlike their success against the Spaniards, the Muslims buckled down under vastly superior American firepower and were placed under local governments manned by Filipino civil servants.²³

With the granting of Philippine independence in 1946, Muslim leaders petitioned the US government for either independence separate from that of the north or the retention of the south as an American protectorate. Their main concern was the presence of Christian Filipinos in their territories and the threat that this posed to Islam. But their main grievance was the exploitation by these Christians of the region's

natural resources which the Muslims regarded as rightfully theirs. The US however, ignored this plea and approved Philippine independence with the northern and southern regions brought together as one nation.²⁴

The post-colonial government merely continued with the American designs for the thorough colonisation of Mindanao-Sulu, especially the intensification of the resettlement programme so as to facilitate the penetration of big foreign and local capitalists. The Moros and other ethnic minorities saw more rapid dispossession of their ancestral domains. Under the new land laws, feudal traditional leaders became owners of once communal lands and disposed of them by either selling them to rich settlers or by using them as their contribution in entering into partnerships with foreign and Filipino businessmen.²⁵

Following a series of massacres of Muslims by armed Christian groups, the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) was organised in 1968, which held that only through the establishment of an independent Islamic republic, that is sovereign and autonomous, can the lot of the Muslim people improve.²⁶ From this group emerged the more radical Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under the leadership of the charismatic former University of the Philippines professor, Nur Misuari. During the early years of martial law in the Philippines, the MNLF posed the biggest armed threat to the Marcos government.

The Muslim-Malays of Thailand

Ethnic Malays constitute the majority in the four southernmost provinces of Thailand. Seventy-five per cent of the country's total Muslim population is concentrated in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun. The Muslims comprise 3.8 per cent of Thailand's total population. Their strict adherence to Islam has alienated them from the mainstream of Thai society and has made them resentful of the chauvinism of the Bangkok government.²⁷ An added source of differentiation is their ethnicity and a language similar to that spoken in the Malaysian province of Kelantan.²⁸

Economically, the Thai Muslims are engaged in small-scale, inefficient and (by Malay standards) unprofitable rubber, rice, and fruit production. Their insignificant presence in middle and large-scale economic activities compared to the Chinese and Thai Buddhists has led to their continuing marginalisation and impoverishment.²⁹

Aggravating this economic disparity between Thailand's Muslims and the Buddhists are their different interpretations of history and opinions on assimilation policies. For the Muslims, the south was historically separate from Thailand so that Bangkok-sponsored assimilation policies are no more than forms of intervention to which the necessary response was resistance to the central government.³⁰

These social, economic, and political tensions existed even prior to the advent of Western colonialism in mainland Southeast Asia. In the 1780s, King Rama expanded the Thai kingdom to the four southern provinces. Although Rama succeeded, to a certain extent, in weakening the hold of Muslim-Malays in these regions, his system of

control failed to reduce the partial autonomy enjoyed by provincial rulers because of communication difficulties. He attempted to remedy this by designating indigenous elites as governors in these provinces instead of sending Thai officials.³¹

Resistance to integration continued even during the last decade of the nineteenth century when there was increasing pressure from the regional colonial powers (the British and the French) on the central Thai government to consolidate its power in the country's outlying provinces. This objective was achieved when Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932. Local rulers were replaced by non-Muslim officials so that the provincial bureaucracy was effectively incorporated into the national officialdom.³²

The Muslim-Malays, however, continued to resist such incorporation and demanded the creation of an autonomous Malay State of Pattani with a local-born Malay as its head. The installation of Thai Buddhists in place of Muslim-Malays in the new provincial administrative units deprived the local elites of political participation and disregarded their significance as the locally recognised leaders.³³ This was further worsened by the Thai government's policies of educational integration, which were refused by the Muslims for fear that it would distract them from Muslim ways and values.³⁴

The refusal of the Muslim-Malays to accept the schemes of Bangkok led to the establishment of their first political organisation, the Gagungan Melayu Pattani Raya (GAMPAR, or the Association of the Malays of Greater Pattani), which was founded in 1948 during the post-War period. In order to operate openly in Malay territorial borders and avoid attracting British attention, GAMPAR posed as a social and cultural organisation seeking to promote Muslim-Malay interests in Malaya and Thailand.³⁵ The Thai government rejected the group.

Under the auspices of the leftist Malay Nationalist Party in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, GAMPAR adhered to the following aims:

"To unite all the Muslim Malays and their descendants in South Siam who are living in Malaya; to establish closer contacts with their homes and relatives in Siam and to improve the living standards and life (sic); to cooperate with each other and help each other; and to improve their education and revive Malay culture among them."³⁶

It was also during the establishment of GAMPAR that the rise of several liberation movements committed to Muslim-Malay separatism came about. Among these was the Pattani United Liberation Front (PULO). The PULO traces its ideological roots to the abortive 1947-48 uprising during which 250,000 Thai-Muslims petitioned the United Nations to preside over the secession of southern Thailand and its incorporation into the Federation of Malaya. In general, PULO advocates a nationalist, socialist, and Islamic liberation ideology. Among all the separatist groups

in southern Thailand, it is the most broad-based. It is also closely allied with the Communist Party of Malaya and its total armed strength is between 500 to 600.³⁷

Under the PULO umbrella, but relatively autonomous, is the National Liberation Front of Pattani (NLFP) formed in 1947, which was one of the three major fronts which emerged from the 1947–48 rebellion. It is a conservative Islamic group advocating the re-establishment of Pattani as an independent State. The NLFP together with the military arm, the Pattani People's National Liberation Army, has several hundreds of men divided into groups of 10 to 25.³⁸

Another group is the Pattani National Revolutionary Front (PNRF). Like PULO, the group traces its origins to the 1947–48 rebellion and it formally organised during the early 1960s. Its objective is the liberation of all Thai Muslims in Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala and Satun and the creation of a socialist order. Its ideology is based on nationalism, Islam and socialism.³⁹ Another separatist group also formed during the early 1960s is the Liberation Front of Republic Pattani (LFRP). Its objective is the liberation of all Thai-Muslims in Pattani preliminary to the establishment of a socialist order. The LFRP is actually a left-leaning breakaway from the rebel mainstream and it went underground in the 1970s. It advocates socialism, Islamisation, and nationalism, but has no armed group and its influence is limited to the province of Yala.⁴⁰

The 1960s also witnessed the establishment of the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) or the National Revolution Front. The BRN was the first truly political organisation to have been launched from within Thailand's Muslim provinces. Its ideology is based on the following principles: Malay nationalism on the basis of the oneness of God and humanitarianism; the adoption of the theory and practice of anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism; and national ideals which are compatible with the ideology and which promises the development of a just and prosperous society sanctioned by God.⁴¹

A more conservative, Islam-oriented, faction of the BRN broke away and established the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP), or the Pattani National Liberation Movement, in September 1977. Its broad political objectives include the liberation of all Muslim areas in southern Thailand from Bangkok and the establishment of a sovereign and independent Islamic State.⁴²

Among the different separatist groups, the Path of God is the only urban-based one. It is committed to violence against all forms of Thai control of the Malay area. It was founded in 1975.⁴³

The reality of Southeast Asian separatism

A common issue tying together the different separatist trends in Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand is the socio-political and economic domination of minority ethnic groups by the ruling one. Thus, one hears of the repression of non-Burmese peoples by the Burmese, the marginalisation of the Irianese by the Javanese, the

subordination of the Moros by the Hispanised Filipinos, and the imposition of Thai rule over the Malay-Muslims in southern Thailand.

An important socio-cultural factor which distinguishes the dominant group from the others is that of religion. In the Philippines and Thailand, Islam is seen as the religion of the minority and in whose name the banner of separatism is unfurled. Religion in Burma also plays a role in highlighting ethnic differences, as seen in the case of the conflict between the Buddhist Burmese and the Christianised Karens. In Indonesia, the Acehese GAM had its roots in the Darul Islam movement, while traditional Melanesian beliefs in Irian Jaya clash with Jakarta's Westernised concepts.

Socio-cultural differences, however, only serve to highlight the basic cause of separatist movements in Southeast Asia, i.e., the economic exploitation of minority ethnic groups. In the four countries studied in this chapter, it was the quest by the more dominant ethnic groups for economic power, e.g., control over natural resources and the expansion of trade and commerce, which led to the imposition of politico-military rule over the more marginalised ethnic communities.

The intrusion of colonialism further intensified majority-minority conflicts in two ways. Firstly, the colonial power pressured the dominant elites in the centre to consolidate their rule over previously autonomous outlying provinces and forcibly integrate their inhabitants into the mainstream of society to facilitate economic exploration and exploitation.

The other way was through the patented colonialist scheme of divide and conquer. For example, the British in Burma directly dealt with the non-Burmese communities and unabashedly combined the Christianisation of the Karens with business deals. In both situations, the colonial powers only succeeded in intensifying the ethnic differences already existing in these societies.

Adding further to ethnic tensions is the perpetuation of economic inequality. The economic systems of minority ethnic groups are either allowed to continue, but subsumed under the majority's own economic rules, or are completely transformed to satisfy national development plans. In any case, the fruits of productive labour are monopolised by the ruling elites. Thus, socio-cultural differences are made more blatant by economic discrepancies.

Adding to this is the development of repressive political structures to strengthen the rule of the central government. In the Philippines, the Marcos government conducted a counter-insurgency campaign of near-genocidal proportions among the Muslim separatists. The Javanese government imposed its political authority over Irian Jaya and ignored long-existing Melanesian political structures.

The general response of Southeast Asian separatist movements to these injustices is to strengthen their resolve to struggle for the establishment of an independent ethnic State responsive to their socio-political and economic concerns. The inability of the region's governments to thoroughly suppress these movements indicates the legitimacy of the issues raised and the relative popular support that these ethnic-based liberation

movements enjoy. All these make the issue of separatism a continuing reality in the lives of Southeast Asian peoples.

Strategies of struggle and survival

Although the pre-colonial and colonial contexts present the root causes of separatism in Southeast Asia, it is also important to delve into the factors which serve to either perpetuate or obstruct these movements.

Foremost among the contributory factors is the ability of the groups to enter into alliances with one another at the local level. Their combined force makes it more difficult for the central government to deal with them. Another relevant issue is the external support which some groups receive from either foreign governments or non-governmental organisations sympathetic to their cause. More often than not, in such cases, military and financial assistance to them exceed their locally generated military supplies or monetary funds.

It appears however, that the resilience of these movements comes to a large extent, from the popular support they are able to garner from their own people, which is usually enhanced by the intensification of government repression, thus winning over more of the people to the separatist cause.

Building alliances

The establishment of local alliances of separatist movements is more the rule than the exception, particularly during the formative stages of these groups. In Burma, the National Democratic Front (NDF) was organised as a non-communist umbrella organisation of the armies of the Karens, Kachins, Shans, Karennis, Was, Pa-os, Palungs, Mons and Arakanese.

Their agreement to form an alliance was to forestall any form of interference in each other's affairs. The NDF members have agreed in principle to temporarily set aside their separatist interests in favour of a federation and to create various regional commands. The North Command, for example, comprises the Kachins, Shans, and Palaung armies, while the Central Command consists of the Pa-o, Wa, and Karenni armies. The Southern Command is manned by the Karens, Mons, and the Arakanese armies.⁴⁴

Although these groups in the NDF are largely anti-communist, some of them have found it convenient to form alliances with the Burmese Communist Party. The BCP is one of the country's oldest insurgency groups and it went underground in 1948. Its 8,000–15,000 strong military force draws heavily from the Akah, Lisu, Lahu, and Waimin hill tribes for recruitment. An NDF group which has joined forces with the BCP is the Karenni People's United Liberation Front. Some Kachin and Shan insurgents also brought their organisations into tenuous alliances with the BCP during the 1960s.⁴⁵

In Thailand, the Pattani National Liberation Front (PULO) provides a broad and flexible umbrella organisation for most of the Muslim–Malay separatists. Thus, a major secessionist group like the National Liberation Front of Pattani is part of the alliance but maintains its autonomy. In recent years, some of the separatist groups have co-ordinated with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), which has expressed support for the former's call for self-determination.⁴⁶

In Indonesia, the FRETILIN, together with its military arm, the 3,000-strong National Liberation Army (FALINTIL), has announced that it will engage in joint military and diplomatic initiatives with the moderate East Timorese Democratic Union (UDT). In the Philippines, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) has admitted to the existence of a tacit agreement on the delineation of territorial areas of operation with the communist New People's Army (NPA). In some areas in Lanao province, there have been reports of joint MNLF–NPA military operations.⁴⁷ This MNLF policy, however, remains ambiguous and the agreement fragile, given the known anti-communist stance of the MNLF's main foreign supporter, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

External support

As important in the formation of alliances among separatist groups in working for their objectives is their ability to secure various forms of external assistance including economic, military, and diplomatic support.

The Free Papua Organisation (OPM) is known to get support from the government of neighbouring Papua New Guinea (PNG) with whose inhabitants a common ethnic background is shared. OPM members find sanctuary across the border in PNG territory. An example was when the OPM took 28 Indonesians hostages of mixed ethnic backgrounds, including a Malaysian businessman in September 1981, brought them into PNG territory and held them captive in a jungle hideout for some months. During this whole period, the PNG government did little to try to locate the hostages, causing pursuing Indonesian troops to illicitly cross the border.⁴⁸

Right-wing Protestant Dutch organisations are also said to be providing funds to the OPM. In Dakar, Senegalese President Leopold Senghor allowed the setting up of a Free Papua Information Office. There is, however, little evidence that the Senegal government has direct links with the OPM.⁴⁹

The South Moluccan Republic (RMS), reportedly gets support from the Dutch military.⁵⁰ The FRETILIN, on the other hand, has opted to shift to a political rather than a purely military campaign and urges States and international organisations to withdraw support and recognition from Jakarta. In the United Nations, where the movement has an accredited ambassador, FRETILIN is trying to forge a peace plan calling for negotiations with the Indonesian government and to include Portugal with Australia as observers.⁵¹

The separatist movements in Thailand also receive foreign support. PULO's military wing, the Pattani United Liberation Army (PULA), gets military and political training abroad. PULO supporters include Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the latter providing military training. Saudi Arabian financial aid is said to be to the tune of US\$ 7-8 million.⁵² The group is also loosely allied with the Communist Party of Malaya, operating along the Thai-Malaysian borders. This is the major reason why Muslim Malaysia withholds support from PULO.⁵³

The Barisan National Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP) also has an international network and has representatives in many Middle East countries and organisations including the OIC secretariat, the Arab League, and the PLO.⁵⁴

An interesting historical sidelight is that during the colonial period, the British authorities in Malaya, although they helped to clamp down on the Thai-Muslim independence group GAMPAR, also organised a secret organisation known as Free Malaya, a movement with irredentist aims. The aim was to solicit the loyalty of Thai-Muslims to help free the three southern Thai provinces from Bangkok rule and convert them into a British colony.

Muslims in the Philippines also find support from Islamic countries. The MNLF's more ardent supporters are Libya, Malaysia, Iran, Syria, the PLO, Iraq, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. MNLF leader Misuari admits to holding office in Libya because according to him, it is the centre of the Front's foreign operations and the Qaddafi government extends all forms of support. Libyan financial aid is said to reach US\$250 million annually. While he was chief minister of Sabah, Tun Mustapha was sympathetic to the MNLF and is believed to have provided sanctuary for Muslims fleeing persecution from the Philippine government. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is said to have matched Libya's US\$250 million aid.⁵⁵

The Organisation of Islamic Conference had openly urged the Marcos government to stop persecuting Muslims and to freeze Christian migration to the south as well as to ensure the safety of the Muslim population. It also resolved to raise funds for the Muslims and create a commission composed of the governments of Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Somalia to discuss with the Philippine government the Muslim issue.

The result was the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 by the concerned parties which sought to create a provisional government in the south and in particular grant autonomy to the 13 provinces defined in the Agreement. The pact, however, did not prosper as both sides accused the other of violating its principles.⁵⁶

In Burma, some of the Shan and Karen rebel groups are said to be receiving tacit support and moral encouragement from Thai sources. It was reported that since the 1950s, the Thai government indirectly encouraged Burmese insurgent groups to operate along its western borders to prevent a tie-up between the Thai Communist Party and the Burmese communists. On the other hand, ethnic groups who are allies of the Burmese Communist Party are supported by China since the latter financially

aids the BCP. Chin and Naya communities are encouraged by their ethnic relations in India and by their Muslim brethren in Bangladesh, but not by their respective governments.⁵⁷

Local funding sources

Among the four Southeast Asian countries, it is only in Burma where separatist movements are able to find lucrative sources of internal financing. Profits from the cultivation of opium have become rich sources of insurgent funds in Shan and Kachin areas.

The Shan plateau, for example, accounts for the major part of the Golden Triangle's opium production of more than 400–500 tonnes per year. With the use of opium as a source of heroin and the growing addiction in Western countries, especially in the United States, these Burmese separatist groups are assured of a steady income to keep their movements alive.⁵⁸

Keeping the cause alive

The utilisation of various strategies perpetuate the separatist cause in Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The formation of tactical as well as strategic alliances, the generation of both material and moral external forms of assistance, and lastly, the winning of the loyalty of a significant segment of the people for whom the separatist struggle is advanced — all of these help keep the fires of rebellion burning.

Alliances are sometimes seen as the key to ultimate victory as it is recognised that given the resources at the command of the central government, no single group can overcome the State apparatus single-handedly. Formations of agreements with communist parties may also add new issues that go beyond ethnicity and majority–minority conflicts such as social class distinctions, poverty and its relation to the distribution of the economic surplus, and strategies for economic development. These larger concerns could then be utilised to gain broader popular support.

With regard to external support for separatism religion, for instance Islam in the case of Thailand and the Philippines, plays a central role in securing the sympathy and assistance of foreign governments. This establishes religion not only as an international rallying point but also as a leverage that may be employed in the pursuit of political objectives.

International organisations such as the United Nations, in the case of FRETILIN (East Timor), and the Organisation of Islamic Conference in the case of the MNLF (Philippines), provide forums for the ventilation of grievances and act as adjudicative bodies for the settlement of disputes. The MNLF, together with the communist-led National Democratic Front, entered pleas and presented evidence in the 1981 Philippine session of the non-governmental International Permanent People's

Tribunal convened in Belgium. The Tribunal, composed of internationally-known figures, pronounced the Marcos government guilty of violating the rights to self-determination of the Moro people and of committing gross abuses of human rights, including acts of genocide.

Support from former colonisers as seen in the solicitation of military assistance by the OPM and RMS in Indonesia from Dutch organisations appears as an alternative form of external aid. It is interesting to note that in the Indonesian experience, foreign support comes from right-wing organisations, contrary to the pattern observed in the other Southeast Asian countries.

Obstacles to separatist goals

The factors which contribute to advancing a movement may, however, also work the other way around. The formation of local alliances may prove to be hazardous due to the presence of conflicting perspectives not only in the strategies of struggle but, more importantly, in the goals to be achieved. One cannot also disregard the gains which governments have achieved in confronting the secessionist threat either through military coercion or political and economic incentives to the separatist leaders as well as through diplomatic initiatives in securing assistance from foreign governments which are directly involved or are concerned with the cross-country effects of the movements.

Lastly, the dependence of separatist groups on external support due to the inadequacy of local funds may make them subservient to the dictates of interested foreign powers. This compromises their credibility as indigenous movements and more crucial, diminishes their capability to establish truly independent ethnic States.

Splits in the alliances

Unfortunately for the separatist movements in the region, their alliances have often been characterised by fractious disputes which lead to organisational splits. These are caused by irreconcilable long-term and short-term objectives as well as leadership squabbles.

The Thai-Muslim movements are divided by differences in the avowed aims, tactics and choice of leaders. One group, for example, favours a separate administrative unit in a federation with Thailand, while another wants an independent State under a sultan. A third faction advocates the establishment of an independent "Republic of Pattani". All Pattani United Liberation Front (PULO) groups, however, discount the possibility of joining the Federation of Malaysia, which is still conducting a war of attrition (though of a smaller scale than that in the 1950s and 60s) with the Communist Party of Malaya. As mentioned earlier, the latter maintains links with the PULO.⁵⁹

Differences arise over ideology. The main umbrella coalition, has been accused by one of its member-groups, the Pattani National Liberation Front (PNRF) of being pro-Moscow. The PULO, on the other hand, has criticised the PNRF for supporting a 'bankrupt sultanate'.⁶⁰ The PNRF has since distanced itself from the PULO.

Other splinter groups in the PULO with the local following and ad hoc set ups are the Black 1902 Movement, the Sabillilah Group, and the United Pattani Freedom Movement. These are breakaway factions from the main separatist movements and are committed to stepping up the pace of the confrontation with Bangkok by resorting to urban guerilla tactics.⁶¹

Apart from the splits in the PULO, Thai separatism was also set back by the break-up of Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN). The group's commitment to international co-operation with political parties in the Afro-Asian bloc such as Malaysia and Indonesia proved to be controversial. The BRN's pan-nationalist outlook antagonised its more conservative and religious members. From this antagonism were born the traditionalist Islam-oriented Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP), Pattani National Liberation Movement, and the strongly socialist Barisan Partai Revolusi Nasional (PRANAS) in 1965.⁶²

In the Philippines, the Moro National Liberation Front and its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), have their share of internal rifts. Since the early 1980s, the MNLF has split into three groups, each aiming to be the 'official representative' of the Bangsa Moro (Moro Nation): The Nur Misuari group, which retains the MNLF name; the Hashim Salamat group, which is also known as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF); and the Pundato-Lucman group, which calls itself the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organisation (BMLO).

Their differences revolve around several issues. One is that of leadership. Misuari, who is a Tausug, had been the undisputed chief since he founded the MNLF but in the splits that ensued, the Maranaos looked up to their own tribal leaders, Dimas Pundato and former Congressman Rashid Lucman. The Maguindanaos, on the other hand, united behind Salamat.

Misuari is said to be a secularist while Salamat, a trained cleric, is beholden to his conservative Middle East patrons, notably Saudi Arabia and Egypt.⁶³ Salamat has also accused Misuari (who in his student days in the University of the Philippines, was a member of the left wing student group — Kabataang Makabayan), of being a Marxist-Maoist, of concentrating power in his hands, and causing demoralisation in the field.

During the late seventies' one policy difference between the two was that while Misuari pushed hard for the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement which provides for the autonomy for 13 Mindanao-Sulu provinces as the framework for future negotiations, Salamat wanted to renegotiate for a moderate and less drastic form of autonomy.⁶⁴

The emergence of the BMLO (Bangsa Moro Liberation Organisation) complicated further the already confused situation. BMLO leaders, former

Congressmen Salipada Pendatun (who died in 1985), and Lucman, believed in the need to establish an autonomous Mindanao that would be divided among the three factions according to geographical and ethno-linguistic boundaries. This plan clashes with Misuari's call for a single autonomous region and Salamat's idea of two regional governments.⁶⁵ Although the BMLO supports Salamat's bid for leadership, it at the same time accuses him and Misuari of being 'superpower puppets' and making arbitrary leadership policies. The BMLO image, however, suffers from an identification with its traditional politician-leaders and the group is regarded as the most conservative of the three factions.

Muslim Congressman Michael Mastura diagnoses that the leadership crisis among the Moros is due to the rise of the faction advocating parliamentary struggle. MILF deputy chairman Haji Murad, for example, is now talking with the Aquino government in order to pave the way for his group's participation in an official mission to deal with the Muslim issue.⁶⁶

In Burma, separatist groups adopt different attitudes towards the Burmese Communist Party. The BCP has been approached with caution and relations have been on a tentative basis. This can be seen in the 1975 experience of the Shan State Army (SSA). The SSA formed an alliance with the BCP for supplies and military training. Two years later, the SSA ended the agreement when it turned its attention towards forging closer relations with other insurgent groups through a broad united front and because its leadership wanted to pursue a non-aligned and neutral foreign policy.

However, in 1983, the BCP-SSA alliance was revived. There are now two tendencies within the group. One faction wants to continue the BCP ties on a permanent basis while the other, mindful of the SSA's dependence on the opium trade, favours a tie-up with the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), a drug running group.

The National Democratic Front (NDF), on the other hand, adopts a hardline position of no compromise with the BCP. It is of the view that the BCP simply wants to control all Burmese nationalities.⁶⁷ In contrast, the Karen National Union (KNU) co-operates with all insurgent groups except some rabidly anti-communist organisations within the NDF (In 1980, it withdrew from the NDF and joined with the BCP).

Internal conflicts also plague the separatist groups in Burma. For example, the KNU has been weakened by an internal struggle among its young officers for control of the US\$3 to 4.3 million smuggling trade along the Thai-Burmese border. The KNU taxes this trade to raise organisational funds.⁶⁸

In East Timor, FRETILIN's alliance with the East Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) on the eve of the Portuguese withdrawal did not last long because the latter favoured gradual independence, while the former urged complete and immediate independence. All this became academic when Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and proclaimed it as its 27th province.⁶⁹ In 1986, however, FRETILIN and UDT

closed ranks once again as Indonesian troops prepared to crack down on the former's mountain strongholds.

Within FRETILIN too, rifts have occurred. In 1977, its military arm, FALINTIL, split between supporters of Nicolao Lobato, who wanted prolonged resistance to Indonesia, and those who were for Xavier Do Amaral, who appeared ready to accept integration.⁷⁰

In Irian Jaya, the Free Papua Organisation's (OPM) military group is wracked by factionalism, ironically due to ethnic quarrels. Aside from this, the leadership is being contested by two aging rivals: Marcus Kaisieppo, 70 years old, and Nicolaas Jouwe, who is 60.⁷¹

Government offensives

Another major obstacle to separatist aims in the region is the comparative gains achieved by Southeast Asian governments in confronting the insurgent groups.

In the Philippines, the Marcos government's response to the Moro rebellion was a combination of military offensives, economic measures such as development projects, and probably more effective, financially attractive amnesty programmes for leaders and rank-and-file members. These efforts are partly responsible for the splits within the MNLF. Marcos, and now President Aquino, were able to implement a divide and rule policy with moderate success. The latter seems to be following in her predecessor's footsteps in dealing with the MNLF. For one thing, she denied a promise made by a personal representative to an MNLF panel on the granting of full autonomy to 23 provinces.⁷²

The diplomatic overtures of the previous and present regime have also allowed the Philippine government a certain degree of leverage. The signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, for one, while viewed by the MNLF as a diplomatic victory with the tacit recognition of its belligerent status, also gave the central government much needed breathing space.⁷³

Islamic governments were also assiduously courted and cajoled and alternately bullied. Marcos pressured the Malaysian government to seal off Sabah from access to the separatists, the State being a main transit point of arms and other supplies to the rebels. After clear and unmistakable signals were sent by Manila, the Indonesian government declared its stand that the resolution of the Muslim conflict should remain within the context of Philippine sovereignty, a position which clashes with the basic stand of the MNLF. These two Southeast Asian Islamic countries, because of their membership in ASEAN, were not willing to unduly antagonise the Philippines for fear of dismembering the regional alliance.⁷⁴ The Marcos government had also taken advantage of Moro factionalism to parry the peace initiatives of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Aside from appealing for assistance from Islamic countries in the region, the Marcos government had also called on the OIC to help it. The flamboyant Imelda

Marcos feverishly courted Libyan leader Qadaffi and other Arab leaders to gain their sympathy. The Aquino government, on the other hand, has not only asked the OIC for help, it has also sought the assistance of the World Muslim League.

The Rangoon government handles its separatist problem by seeking a negotiated solution by searching for a degree of accommodation between the demands of the insurgent groups and the political requirements of the central State. Of course, military operations are equally utilised. Lastly, there are the combined psychological, symbolic, and politico-economic and social policies designed to lure both leaders and rank and file members.⁷⁵

Perhaps the government model for such accommodations is the 1947 Panglong Agreement when the Shans joined the government of Aung San's Union on a ten-year trial basis where the Shans' autonomy was guaranteed except in foreign relations. Under this union, the Shan State was represented in Parliament and the first Union President was a Shan, Sao Shwetalak.⁷⁶

Burma's diplomatic overtures have also been relatively successful. In the 1970s, a Rangoon-Beijing rapprochement resulted in the reduction of Chinese material support to the BCP and by 1980, there were signs that this assistance had dropped sharply. This weakened the Shan-BCP alliance and the former turned more increasingly to the opium economy to support its activities.⁷⁷

Forging treaties with nations known to be sympathetic to the separatist cause have also been effective deterrents to local rebellions. In 1973, Indonesia pressured the government of Papua New Guinea to sign a Joint Border Agreement (updated in 1979), which pledged "that both countries shall consult each other on mutual security problems and to take whatever action is necessary to prevent the border area of one from being used for hostile purposes against the other." The PNG government, however, showed great reluctance in implementing the Agreement, as shown by the 1981 hostage incident. The reason is that PNG leaders do not want to risk an expected popular outcry against the use of force against fellow Melanesians, especially in a joint operation with the Suharto government.⁷⁸

Pitfalls of foreign support

The reliance of most Southeast Asian separatist movements on external support particularly from foreign governments, has led to problematic situations, as this has functioned as a double-edged sword. The dependence of the Moro separatists on the OIC, for example, has subjected the former to the whims of the international body, which is far from being a united bloc. Thus, a strong conservative section of the OIC led by Saudi Arabia had allowed Marcos to railroad his own version of Muslim autonomy for the southern Philippines.⁷⁹

Other interests of some OIC members which has priority over the concerns of Philippine Muslims have resulted in decreased assistance to MNLF. As pointed out, the ASEAN countries of Malaysia and Indonesia give priority to the unity of the

regional grouping, thus limiting their support for the Moro movement. National interests also take precedence. Indonesia, for one, fears that if the Philippine insurgents succeed, this could catalyse similar movements in its own territory. Malaysia desires peace in Mindanao-Sulu because it wants to send back the 200,000 Philippine Muslim refugees in Sabah.⁸⁰

The difficulty of sustaining support is especially felt by FRETILIN. As a result, the group has now ruled out a military victory over Indonesia and relies heavily on international diplomacy to resolve the conflict. However, most of the interested governments, including members of the Non-Aligned Movement, view Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor as a *fait accompli*. Thus their attitude is one of resignation.

As for the superpowers, they feel that it is more important to maintain good relations with Indonesia, it being a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Besides, Western powers like the US, have always discouraged any type of rebellion in countries whose governments are perceived as allies and where their global security interests are at stake.

The U.S. government has thus consistently voted negatively on every UN resolution calling for the recognition of the right of the East Timorese to self-determination. The major reason for this is that by maintaining its friendly ties with Suharto, the US is able to promote its military and economic presence in the area and protect its free passage through the Omai-Wetar Straits north of Timor. These Straits are the only direct route through which American nuclear armed Poseidon and Polaris submarines may pass submerged between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.⁸¹

Other powerful countries such as Japan, Canada, France, and the Soviet Union also avoid antagonising Indonesia. The USSR, although it votes in favour of the UN resolution on East Timor, does not send any aid to FRETILIN as a sign of appreciation for the refusal of Indonesia to reopen diplomatic relations with arch-enemy China.

In Australia, the increasingly right-leaning labour government of Prime Minister Hawke, has reversed its past position and now endorses Indonesia's forcible annexation of East Timor. This can be attributed to a strong lobby in the Australian Oil Co. which hopes to benefit from recent oil finds in Timor.⁸² Thus the interests of multinational corporations also get in the way of separatist movements. The Portuguese government, a formerly uncompromising opponent of the Indonesian invasion, is now considering recognising Jakarta's sovereignty in East Timor in exchange for certain guarantees on human rights and consular representation in Indonesia to protect Lisbon's interests. FRETILIN has denounced this as a move towards a bilateral settlement between Indonesia and Portugal without the Front's participation or UN supervision.⁸³

The Non-Aligned Movement has not proven itself effective in fighting for FRETILIN's cause. It has no mechanism to implement its resolutions supporting the East Timor people's right to self-determination. The movement's Arab bloc has thrown its weight behind fellow OPEC member and Islamic brother Indonesia.⁸⁴

The obstacles in review

The difficulties experienced by Southeast Asian separatist movements remain major stumbling blocks to the advancement of their goals. In alliances, sectarianism often prevails and long-term interests are sacrificed for short-term benefits. Sometimes long-term aims clash and prove even more lethal to the movement. Power struggles among the different leaders undermine the ability of the group to lead the overall struggle.

Governments often take advantage of the fragile nature of alliances and even cultivate internal strife among the separatists. There is also the reality that governments run by dominant elites possess greater leverage, particularly in global diplomacy, than small separatist groups for the simple reason that State-to-State or elite-to-elite relations are accorded more importance than the legitimate aspirations of oppressed ethnic populations. Thus, *realpolitik* prevails at the international level.

Power plays in international relations also determine the future of separatist movements. Only when their interests coincide with those of secessionist struggles will powerful nations come to the former's assistance and only on a temporary and *ad hoc* basis. All these are painful realities which separatism in Southeast Asia and in the rest of the world have to contend with.

The quest for self-determination

An examination of separatist groups in Southeast Asia will uncover the various factors that brought them about, as well as the differing strategies employed to achieve established goals. Among the causative factors, the issue of ethnicity is foremost. This may be expressed in the form of upholding one's religious beliefs, as in Thailand and the Philippines, or a particular way of life, as in the Melanesians of Irian Jaya and the Shans and Karens of Burma.

But it is not ethnicity *per se* that constitutes the problem since as a whole, Southeast Asia is composed of hundreds of ethno-linguistic groups. It becomes an issue only when a dominant ethnic group takes control of the State apparatus and proceeds to impose its will on the rest of the population.

The class issue is also entwined with the ethnic factor whereby the ruling class which appropriates the economic surplus is also the dominant ethnic group in the country. This is not to say, however, that class divisions are absent within the dominated ethnic groups. In the Philippines, there are rich landowning Muslims whom Misuari's MNLF also contends with. The former often try to blunt the class issue by raising exclusively ethnic concerns.

Corollary to the ethnic issue is the quest for legitimacy and nationhood. What is desired is recognition of the rights of ethnic communities to exist without being oppressed by other tribes and more importantly, the right to determine one's interests

and concerns. This coincides with the concept of nationhood which is reflective of their self-identity.

The situation is complicated further when legitimacy and nationhood are hindered by external factors such as imperialism or colonialism. In this case, exploitation exists not so much because of ethnic distinctions but because local communities are made to play a definite role in the workings of the prevailing international economic order. Because of this, some separatist groups such as the MNLF and PULO carry broader issues like anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism and consequently espouse alternatives based on some form of Islamic socialism.

Differing levels of exploitation also produce different aims and objectives which affect the viability of alliances. Those groups who merely advocate parliamentary democracy for the whole country, where all nationalities are granted legislative seats may be content with the political participation of its leaders in the centres of power.

On the other hand, some movements may regard such a form of participation as token representation and would push for economic and class equality as well. The latter find it easier to form alliances with communist parties which also seek fundamental socio-economic changes. It is, however, important to point out that the integration of broader national issues into separatist struggles will not necessarily downgrade the ethnic factor so as to blur distinctions between for example, the MNLF and the CPP-NPA, or the SSA and the BCP. Thus, ethnic liberation fronts always make special efforts to distinguish themselves and maintain their distance from communist movements in the region.

From one perspective, this may prove to be disadvantageous to both groups as it splits the anti-government cause and breeds a permanent atmosphere of distrust between the two movements. On the other hand, even if communist or left-wing movements successfully topple a government, it would still have to confront the ethnic question. If handled improperly, it may pose a thorny problem that will not easily go away.

The Nicaraguan case is particularly instructive. Given the inability of the Sandinista government to address Misquito Indian concerns, the US government took advantage of the situation to arm the Indians to fight Managua. It is thus important that at an early stage, points of convergence must already be determined and the ethnic issue be properly addressed by all popular movements to avoid problems in the event of a change in power relations.

While disregarded by nationalist and left movements in the past, it is now becoming clear that ethnicity as an issue is here to stay and has to be included as a primary item in the national agenda. The articulation between class and ethnic issues have to be carefully studied. At what points do they converge and diverge?

Disagreements may arise in the process of delineating priorities and interests and difficult compromises may have to be made. The success of such efforts will of course depend on the extent to which separatist groups in particular, and popular movements

in general, are able and willing to set aside narrow sectarian interests for the larger cause.

Notes

1. Lim Joo-Jock and S. Vani, (eds.) Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1985
2. ibid., p.32
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
6. ibid., p.52
7. "The Karenni Connection," Far Eastern Economic Review (hereinafter to be referred to as FEER), 18 June 1982.
8. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p. 85
9. ibid., p.88
10. Bertil Lintner, "The Shan and Shan State of Burma," Contemporary Journal of Southeast Asia, 1984.
11. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p. 85.
12. "Centuries of Distrust," FEER, 5 April 1983.
13. Lintner, op. cit.
14. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.53
15. ibid., pp.111-112.
16. ibid.
17. ibid., p.180
18. ibid., pp.173-175.
19. ibid., p.174.
20. Denis Freney, "FRETILIN: Death and Resurrection," Southeast Asia Chronicle, Issue no. 14
21. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.152.
22. ibid.
23. Stuart Schlegel, Muslim-Christian Conflict in the Philippine South, mimeo, n.d.
24. ibid.
25. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.154.
26. Leila Garner Noble, The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines, mimeo, n.d.
27. Kochadum Na Taksin, "Thai Politics Through Southern Eyes," Southeast Asia Chronicle, Issue No. 69.
28. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.217
29. Chaiwath Satha-Anand, Islam and Violence: A Case Study of Violent Events in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand: 1976- 1981, Monographs on Religion and Public Policy, Department of Religious Studies, University of Southern Florida.
30. ibid.
31. Haemindra Nanthawan, The Problem of Thai Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand, mimeo, n.d.
32. ibid.
33. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.227.
34. Haemindra Nanthawan, Part II, The Problem of Thai..., op. cit.
35. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.237.
36. ibid.
37. Geoffrey Gunn, "Radicalism in Southeast Asia: Rhetoric and Reality in the Middle Eastern Connection," Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1986.
38. Andrew Foker, "Legacy of Resentment," FEER, 20 June 1987.

39. ibid.
40. Satha-Anand, op. cit.
41. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.299.
42. ibid.
43. Satha-Anand, op. cit.
44. "Centuries of Distrust," FEER, 5 April 1983.
45. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.300.
46. Kochadum Na Taksin, op. cit.
47. "Marcos Buys More Time," FEER, 5 June 1978.
48. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.138.
49. ibid., p.137.
50. Chandran Jeshurum, Governments and Rebellions in Southeast Asia, Inst. of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985.
51. Freney, op. cit.
52. Paisal Sricharatchanya, "The Muslims Move In," FEER, 9 October 1981.
53. John Mcbeth, "Separation is the Goal and Religion is the Weapon," FEER, 20 June 1980.
54. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.138.
55. Sheila Ocampo, "Calling in the Neighbors," FEER, 8 February 1980.
56. Resolution No. 4 of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers Meeting.
57. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.61.
58. ibid., p.66
59. Haemindra, op. cit.
60. Sricharatchanya, "The Muslims Move In," FEER, 9 October 1981.
61. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.212.
62. ibid., p.240.
63. Geoffrey Gunn, op. cit.
64. "Marcos buys..," FEER, op. cit.
65. Ocampo, op. cit.
66. Manila Chronicle, 9 February 1987.
67. Rodney Tasker, "Stepping Up The War," FEER, 16 April 1987.
68. Sricharatchanya Paisal, "Unity Is The Raiders Target," FEER, 8 October 1982.
69. Peter Wise, "East Timor Offensive," FEER, 10 April 1986.
70. Freney, op. cit.
71. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.136.
72. Amando Doronila, "Peace Formula: A Challenge to the Panels," Manila Chronicle, April 1987.
73. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.164.
74. Ocampo, op. cit.
75. Jeshurum, op. cit.
76. Hikaru Kerns, "A State of Strife," FEER, 26 Nov. 1982.
77. Lim and Vani, op. cit., p.99.
78. ibid., p.138.
79. Noble, op. cit.
80. James Clad, "The Misuari Gamble," FEER, 11 September 1986.
81. M.A. Browning, and Susan Vitka, "East Timor and Diplomatic Pragmatism," Southeast Asia Chronicle, Issue No. 94.
82. ibid.
83. ibid.
84. ibid.

5

Survival against development

Ed Maranan

During the authoritarian regime of Ferdinand Marcos, the Philippines saw the emergence of an ideology of developmentalism that was aid-dependent, infrastructure-oriented, and designed to camouflage the economic plunder of the country's resources as well as the suppression of human rights and people's movements.

It was also the period when the country's minority groups — called 'ethnic groups', 'cultural communities', 'tribal Filipinos', etc. — began veering away from the traditional, State-fostered ideal of integration and assimilation, towards the principle of self-determination.

Self-determination is now seen as the key to the survival of the minority groups' indigenous and self-sustaining culture, which is taken here in its broadest material and non-material sense: political, social and economic institutions, custom and tradition, arts and crafts, worldview, as well as the ecosystem.

Self-determination has become a transformational guiding concept. It is the political line of the minorities' resistance against the State's technocratic programme and practice of development without consultation. The minority groups have been neglected for long in the macro-economic plans and schemes of the central government, and have been historically isolated from 'mainstream society', as well as from one another precisely because they have at various periods systematically resisted enforced integration by outside agents, both foreign and Filipino.

One of the enduring and most tragic ironies of Philippines history is the fragmentation and dispersion of the indigenous inhabitants, who had resisted homogenisation into a colonial society. Today, they remain tucked away in the mountains and hinterland of the archipelago and their isolation and 'backwardness' is the historical outcome of their resistance to armed intrusion and attempts at the takeover of their ancestral domain. 'Ethnic minoritisation', thus, is a phenomenon

spawned by hundreds of years of colonialism, both Spanish and American, and by the post-colonial process of elite reconstitution and consolidation under a neo-colonial system.

At present, the Philippine national minority groups continue to experience the incredible hardships that characterise the precarious existence of people reduced, despite their extraordinarily rich culture and exemplary stewardship of a physical habitat, into virtual sub-societies. The fate of 'ethnic Filipinos' has been one of discrimination, neglect, and decimation, not only as a result of disease and poverty, but also because of displacement and militarisation.¹ This last, in turn, has been the primary means by which the authoritarian State has succeeded in protecting the economic interests of domestic and transnational (or multinational) capital, while opening up to them the vast natural resources which, since antiquity, have formed part of the nurturing ecosystem of the minoritised groups.

The developmentalist ethic of a Third World State-system such as the Philippines, heavily dependent on foreign programmes and foreign aid (even as loans), proceeds from an anti-people notion of progress. The developmentalist mindset effectively creates a modern-day juggernaut powered by technical jargon and economic justifications. Before its path lie, like so many obstacles, 'simplistic' demands, which are really historically-rooted dreams: Genuine land reform for peasants, fair wages and just working conditions for the working class, decent dwellings for the urban poor on pieces of land they can call their own, respect for the ancestral domain and the indigenous lifestyles of the national minorities. These demands are swept away as counter-developmental, or even dealt with violently when they assume 'subversive' proportions.

A Filipino Marxist, employing class analysis of Philippine society, can readily point out that it is the aggregate majority delineated above who have been effectively minoritised in terms of true political representation and control of the national wealth. However, the specific historical development of the Philippine minority groups resists the formulations of conventional class analysis,² if only because they represent an extremely marginalised group within the larger minority group (which includes the peasantry, working-class, petty bourgeoisie, and the urban poor), and suffer the whole range of discrimination ('ethnic prejudice') precisely because of their being 'apart', 'different', 'isolated' and 'backward'. On the other hand, their poverty, their geographical location, and their long record of anti-colonial resistance have underscored the revolutionary potential of the ethnic minority groups, and indeed, since the early seventies, they have participated directly or indirectly in political movements against the dictatorship, involving themselves in both, localised or national issues through mass-based organisations or movements such as the Consultative Assembly of Minority Peoples of the Philippines (CAMPP), the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), and the Partido Kordilyera, the last having been organised for participation in the electoral struggle.

The national minority question had lain buried under the hierarchy of threats to national security and national development, and way down in the list of priority projects.

When the Marcos regime was confronting the whole range of socio-economic and political challenges to its legitimacy and to the very structure of the system, it did so on the basis of a perceived hierarchy of threats: Agrarian unrest, restive labour (both seen as a result of, not a basis for, effective communist agitation), and a slack in economic activities, especially foreign investments. The regime responded to these threats with a wide variety of subterfuge and palliatives. Land reform, a sham as it turned out, was proclaimed for the whole country right at the onset of martial law. Unemployment was temporarily eased by encouraging the export of manpower, and by opening up export processing zones whose main attractions to investors were available infrastructure and one of the cheapest labour markets in the region. Economic activity was given a boost, not through genuine nationalist industrialisation, but by opening up the wealth of the land to full exploitation by local and fully alien-owned enterprises. This free-for-all zone included forest preserves, tracts of land, and other resources upon which depended the survival of various minority groups.

It was only when the Communist Party of the Philippines, through its military arm, the New People's Army, started recruiting people from among the national minority groups, that the regime felt any need to take into account the minorities issues. And this it did by instituting 'development' (read 'counter-insurgency') measures in areas dominated by them. The developmentalist ethic of 'progress', or 'modernisation' showed what it was capable of when it attempted to build the Chico River hydroelectric dam in the heart of the Cordillera range, a project which would have displaced more than 100,000 Bontocs and Kalingas, submerged villages, ancestral burial grounds and rice terraces, in a monstrous artificial lake whose spill-off would have generated power for commercial consumers in the lowlands.

'Development' also reared its head in the pine forests of the western Cordillera, home to thousands of the Tinggian (or Itneg) national minority group, in the form of a proposed crony-owned timber resource corporation that would have fed 200,000 hectares of prime timber into the sawmills of Cellophil. The list of malevolent projects under the Marcos regime was long, and the various forms of struggle to expose and oppose them were not without great loss of life.

It is necessary to point out that the demise of the Marcos dictatorship has by no means pulled the rug from under the feet of developmentalism.³ President Corazon Aquino's first few months in office saw a stream of foreign offers on development assistance, many of which interestingly dovetailed with the government's efforts to blunt the cutting edge of insurgency in the countryside.

The ambiguity with which the central government has treated the national minority question, has only made more fertile the fields of conflict between the State and the Philippine ethnic minority groups. The disaffection of the latter, particularly the people of the Cordillera or the northern mountain region of the Philippines, has

resulted in the formation of an armed resistance movement which, though split right now into two armed groups, nevertheless generally complements the nation-wide insurgency led by the National Democratic Front (NDF).⁴

Insofar as nationalism is interpreted as the directed expression (or 'constitutive idea') of an idealised unity of all people in a society seeking sovereign nationhood, it is presumed more desirable than ethnicism, than communalism most definitely. This is because it (ideally) attempts to bring together into an organic homogenised polity, ethnic and/or racial groups who ordinarily, in pre-nationhood conditions, would be divided by language, custom and tradition, territorial imperatives, even by the colour of their skin.

But nationalism does not always work out in exactly this felicitous manner. Nationalism may also, oftentimes, turn out to be the ideational expression of majority class/caste/ethnic interests, especially when majority groups have been favoured by historical, cultural, geopolitical and other circumstances, as in the case of the separatist, anti-colonial Philippine Revolution of 1896-1900. This was primarily articulated and led by the *Ilustrado* or 'enlightened' upper middle class, and mainly fought by the Christianised majority ethnic groups, although elements from the non-Christian, non-Muslim ethnic minority groups also participated.

Nationalism can be used to advance class/caste/ethnic interests at the expense of other groups, or at least in the process of socio-political transformation leave the latter far behind, as in the case of Philippine 'national development', after the period of 'decolonisation'. In the case of the Philippines, the following highlights in its colonial history may serve to provide an analytical key to understanding the later split into 'mainstream society' (ethnic majority) and the national minority groups:

1. Political, military, economic and ecclesiastical control over the predominantly lowland population, leaving highland and hinterland groups, as well as the Muslims in the south, in relative freedom from Christianity, European-style feudalism, and full-scale capitalist and technological penetration;
2. emergence of a new social, political, economic elite composed, initially, of the pre-colonial village headmen turned local administrators (the *principalia*), the friarhood, and colonial civil-military officials;
3. further social stratification with the rise of a mixed-breed middle-class enriched by trade and agriculture, serving as an intermediate class between, on the one hand, the local chiefs and the masses, and on the other, the closed circle of European colonisers and Church hierarchy; and
4. continued peripheral existence of the 'tribals', regarded as savages by the colonisers, and the target of repeated expeditions and pacification campaigns.

Anthropologist Ponciano Bennagen, has described colonialism's effect on Filipino society as having:

"... intensified the differentiation of the island populations into highland communities and lowland communities ... hastened the economic differentiation of relatively homogenous societies into class societies ... intensified the differences between elites and the masses, and especially ... class antagonism within and across ethnic boundaries ... (and) initiated the emergence of a national culture, in its structural and symbolic meaning."⁵

The nationalist revolution of 1896 sought principally a political decolonisation, and could not have resolved deep-seated ethnic questions, such as the 'assimilation' or 'integration' of the non-Christianised Philippine groups and their equal development with the rest of society. The leadership of the revolution was even to be contested by two factions within the leading majority ethnic group (the Tagalog), but which was more an expression of contradictions within a socio-political class suddenly sensitised to the feel of power, and less a clash of intra-ethnic interests.

In a very recent demonstration of how conflict in a revolutionary context may involve ethnicity, the guerilla insurgents of the Cordillera region split into two rival camps in 1986. One is the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) led by the 'renegade priest', Conrado Balweg. The other is the Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF), which has links with the Communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF). At present, the CPDF appears to command more forces and enjoys a wider mass support than Balweg's breakaway faction. The split was caused by differences over policy, party discipline, and ultimately, revolutionary goals, but the Balweg camp has raised ethnic issues to justify its breaking off from the main body of the armed struggle in the north.

Rather than continue participation in a national revolution propelled — in a classic Marxist manner — by exacerbations in class contradictions within society, intensified by imperialist intervention, Balweg's CPLA has chosen to cut off the Cordillera as a separate area for liberation, where the mountain people shall have full autonomy — independence even from the present government. Reacting against its being 'used' by the 'lowland' revolutionary movement to advance the latter's goals, Balweg's movement seeks, at the very least, autonomous control of the mountain region in a federal type of State-system. The whole programme, however, continues to be put in doubt by counterclaims from the CPDF that the 'vision of Balweg' has simply been a defensive reaction to the serious charges brought against him, charges which stemmed not from a variance in theoretical views on revolutionary strategy, but from 'financial and sexual opportunism' and 'narrow personal ambition'.

The Balweg episode, at this stage of the Philippine revolution, nevertheless, has dramatically posed the role of ethnicity in the radical transformation of Philippine society. Ethnicity is basically a conservational issue, modernisers would probably look

at it as an atavistic one that may be pursued through both gradualist–developmentalist and revolutionary–separatist methods.

At present, it is only the Cordillera people of northern Luzon, among the many minority ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines, who have a political and military organisation with which to support their struggle for recognition, survival, and equality. But the ideals expressed in their manifestos, statements and programme of action, might as well have been those of the other groups, and proceed from the basic premise that the main problem is ‘national oppression’. In a lecture delivered by Fr. Ed Balicao, (CPDF spokesperson and member of Christians for National Liberation–Northern Luzon), the point is made very explicit:

“We are national minorities because during the American colonial rule, national oppression was institutionalised through government bodies like the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes and the Commission on National Integration Today, the Cordillera people are still suffering from national oppression which is the non-recognition of our right to our ancestral domain, of ourselves as having a different cultural identity, and the violation of our right to self-determination.”⁶

It may be asked then: what is the ‘national question’ in relation to the ethnic situation in the Philippines? Is it mainly the problem of nationalism *vis-à-vis* colonialism, or more properly, neo-colonialism? Is it about the integration or harmonisation of conflicting ethnic interests, perhaps leading to a ‘dissolution’ of ethnicism and the complications it entails? These questions are important in approaching the Philippine case because here, the ‘national minority question’ is inextricably tied up with the ‘national question’. The basic method of resolving this issue is a programmatic mechanism of nationalism and democracy which can complete the process of final and genuine decolonisation.

It has been a common observation among theoreticians of Third World history and politics, that post-colonial arrangements, in the main, have only served to create a new elite, minoritise and marginalise the vast majority, and, in the case of countries like the Philippines, systematically underdevelop that specific group of inhabitants known as the ‘indigenous’ or the ‘tribal’. The national question in the Philippines, thus is primarily a problem of resolving issues historically raised by the national minorities, both the tribal and Muslim. Since a significant number of the former have been Christianised, the matter of religious belief barely counts as a factor in their presentation of demands. This is in stark contrast to the premises of Muslim secessionism or autonomism, in which the political, economic and cultural demands are rooted not only in their historical occupation of territory, but also in their practice of Islam.

In both cases, the national question is confronted with the proposition that self-determination — whether in the separatist or non-separatist context — is ultimately

superior to assimilation/integration, under the present circumstances. Perceptions of the principle of self-determination have, of course, differed.

Such perceptions, and their contraries, are necessarily rooted in the fundamental question of State and State power. Self-determination, undoubtedly, does not strike all quarters, least of all central authorities and statist, as a positive end unto itself. What is basically wrong with the self-determination-versus-State formula, however, is the failure to attempt a 'reconceptualisation' of the State with the aim of restructuring it in such a way as to make possible practical and beneficial the integration of a truly pluralist community in order to obviate the necessity for the self-determination of any of its parts.

Colonialism's impact on ethnic society

The colonial occupation of the Philippines by the United States did more than intensify the tactics and methods of imperialist pacification, kill more people in a few years than the Spaniards did in three hundred years, and introduce a new style of civilian-military bureaucracy. American colonialism transformed a large part of the nationalist and revolutionary elite into a collaborating elite, their wealth and social privileges intact, and assured for the first time of an actual chance to help run the Philippine government. The last the Spaniards could only vaguely promise, if at all, and would have been done through colonial representation in the Spanish Cortes, not in an indigenous, autonomous, self-governing Filipino institution.

The American colonial government retained the feudal structure of society, while introducing capitalist trade, industry, and agriculture; undertook a system of civil service which theoretically put a premium on merit, honesty, and efficiency; and instituted public education whose main and fundamental content was a general introduction to the principles of American liberalism and free enterprise. More importantly, it put the highest priority, during the first ten years, on completing the pacification of the islands, centralising political and military authority and controlling the country's natural and mineral resources. Towards this end, thousands of American troops, with the usual Filipino mercenaries, waged a war of counter-insurgency that sapped the strength of the guerilla holdouts of the Philippine Revolutionary Army, and killed or maimed almost a million Filipinos, most of them non-combatants.

Even long before pacification was completed, the colonial government had already begun decreeing laws that gave it full control and disposition of Philippine territory, including all mineral and natural resources. The Land Registration Act of 1902, required the registration and titling of all land to individual proprietors, and conflicted with Igorot concepts and customs governing land use. To the Igorots, "working the land was the sole requirement for proof of ownership (and) it was not possible to own land individually; land was the property of families, clans, communities, and tribes, of the ancestors, the present generations, and the generations

to come; and thus to most of the Cordillera's indigenous inhabitants, the American law was unthinkable, much less acceptable (so that) few complied with it."

As if this were not sufficient, the colonial government passed another law which effectively laid open, as a free zone, all untitled Igorot lands to whoever would have the capability for exploitation. This was the Mining Act of 1905, declaring that "untitled property could be occupied, purchased, and exploited by any Filipino or American citizen who wanted to invest in mining" and as a consequence of this legislation, "mines which had been owned and run by Benguet families for generations fell into the hands of American capitalists."⁷

Thus, the process of colonisation was also a process of dispossession, of disinheritance. To a people who had held stewardship of land for ages, the idea of a Torrens Title, or a cadastral survey setting the final boundaries of a piece of land property that could be sold and resold infinitely, was alien, abhorrent. The feudal ideology brought in by Spanish colonialism, which resulted in the institutionalisation of land ownership through royal land grants, conquest, confiscation, was not superseded, but was in fact reinforced by the American colonial policy of allowing the Philippine elite to hold on to their big landholdings in exchange for their political, economic, indeed, ideological collaboration.

Therefore, in effect while the elite enjoyed benefits under the Spanish regime and gradually ascended to political power under tutelage during the American regime, they were being consolidated and homogenised into a modern nation-state with all the 'benefits' of a centralised bureaucracy, public education, general social services, foreign trade and diplomacy, and the protection of a national standing army. The rest of the population and the majority of the ethnic groups — with their territory now much reduced or completely redrawn, their mineral wealth already controlled by the State or owned by private corporations, their lifeways, arts, crafts, and entire tribal material and spiritual culture made the curious objects of study by social scientists — were beginning to feel the full impact of growing minoritisation and isolation.

Present issues and challenges

Land as life is the fundamental belief that brought together the Philippine national minorities in confronting the authoritarian-developmental State under Marcos. The 14 years of martial law witnessed the worst deterioration of the national minorities' living conditions. At the same time, the biggest foreign loans and the highest public expenditures in the history of the country were being earmarked for 'development' purposes. 'Dirt-poor' aptly described the situation of the minorities in the midst of their once plentiful, nurturing environment. The degradation of their natural habitat through unchecked illegal logging operations, opening up of new mining concessions, and expansion of land-hungry agro-industrial projects, has been accompanied by a policy of militarisation with the twin objective of wiping out the alleged mass support being enjoyed by the Philippine insurgents among the tribal

communities, and at the same time to provide physical security to infrastructural projects as well as economic concessions.

One year after the downfall of the Marcos dictatorship, say the representatives of the national minorities through their various organisations (CAMPP, CPA, National Alliance of Advocates for Minority Rights, and others), no major gains have been achieved by them in terms of reversing the deteriorating conditions of life and habitat, as well as of human rights, of the minority people. As far as they are concerned, the point of no return has been passed: The chance for assimilation and integration, or prosperity under the present State-system has been lost.

Bennagen, noting that there have been a number of government agencies set up to study and implement 'national integration', has pointedly argued that the "economic inequalities and unjust relations obtaining among the various ethnic groups in the Philippines" can be traced to their roots in colonial history. These, according to him, "have been exacerbated by the present structures of domination in the country and in the world-system currently dominated by the United States, Western European countries, and Japan."⁸

The government of Aquino, and that which will succeed hers, will probably have to contend with the fact that even with a constitutional provision allowing autonomy, unrest among the national minorities will continue as long as the ongoing process of development is not revised so as not to jeopardise the interests of people whose land will be drastically affected. Even now, infrastructure projects begun during the Marcos period have not been totally abandoned. New private explorations in minority country, such as a projected coal mine in Mangyan land in Mindoro, are being contemplated, if not already started. A massive infrastructure project in the Cordillera, initiated and funded by the European Economic Community (EEC), has met with stiff resistance from the CPA due to the absence of consultation with the people in whose area the project is going to be launched.

Related to this is a recent decision of the Aquino government to allocate Peso 538 million (around US\$27 million) for the development of 13 towns in Benguet and the Mt. Province in the Cordillera, under the Highland Agriculture Development Project or HADP. Funds for this project are supposed to come from loans provided by the Asian Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Salient features of this project, which will emphasise agricultural development and diversification through infrastructure projects and support services, include construction and rehabilitation of communal irrigation systems and farm-to-market roads, strengthening extension services, research marketing and soil conservation. The ultimate goal is supposedly to solve the problem of "depressed incomes, low productivity and under-employment among the poorest segment of the farming population" and to "reduce the development disparity between upland and lowland agriculture in the country."⁹

What has attracted close scrutiny and criticism, however, is the earlier EEC project originally scheduled for implementation in January 1987. Announced as early

as July 1986, the EEC project involves a US\$50 million development package for the country, US\$20 million of which was intended to fund the building of irrigation systems, roads and other projects in the Cordillera.

A document prepared by a group of non-government organisations (NGOs) involved in minority rights, assesses the overall potential impact of the huge development programme upon the lives of the Cordillera people. While acknowledging that "the proposed aid could be of major value to the Cordillera and significantly contribute to its development ... as presently conceived (it) contains shortcomings particularly regarding methods of implementation which could undermine its value." Reacting thus to the consultants report of two representatives of the EEC who made 'two brief visits of seven days in 1986', the document lists some areas of 'omission or inaccuracy' such as: (1) Consultation with the people of the Cordillera in all stages of the programme; (2) inadequate consideration of the (recent) history of the area, as it is bound to have a profound influence on any externally initiated development effort to be introduced; (3) inadequate sensitivity to the political environment; (4) the politico-legal problem of the ownership and control of the land and the negative influence this exerts over development; and (5) need for a greater degree of cultural advice regarding local religious and belief patterns, particularly concerning rice and rice production.

Apprehensions expressed over the EEC-funded Cordillera project basically stem from the negative experience brought by similar super-infrastructure schemes such as the World Bank funded Chico River hydroelectric dam, whose construction has been indefinitely postponed with the accession to power of the Aquino government in February 1986. As has been aptly put, "In the Cordillera, the tribals are poor not simply because they lack certain things – irrigation, credit, improved seeds, good roads, etc. What poor tribals lack is power, the power to secure what they need through proper and democratic representation in the government."¹⁰

On self-determination

How does self-determination ensure survival against development, the type of development which amounts to a State strategy for hindering the progress of genuine people's political, cultural and economic mechanisms?

Self-determination is a complex of human rights which has been invoked by various groups, and in world forums. A United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights was drafted by a special assembly of indigenous NGOs in 1985. The Second Principle declares that:

"All indigenous nations and peoples have the right to self-determination, by virtue of which they have the right to whatever degree of autonomy or self-government they choose. This includes the right to freely determine their political status, freely pursue their own economic, social, religious and

cultural development, and determine their own membership and or citizenship, without external interference.”¹¹

If finally ratified and adopted by the international body, this document may well officially stand as a ringing statement of the world’s indigenous people. But, contemporary history has taught us that universal documents and international bodies can be powerless in the enforcement of idealistic programmes and visions. It remains for the individual indigenous people of each region, each statement, to forcefully assert the demands that flow out of the desire for self-determination.

In the Philippines, the demand for self-determination has been criticised as fragmentational, and contrary to the logic of building a nation from the structural ruins of a colonial past. Even as the central government, through its ‘negotiators’, has agreed to explore the limits of autonomy that it can ‘allow’ the minority groups, its ambivalence has resulted in inconclusiveness, and deadlocks, in the negotiations. Self-determination for a national ethnic minority is not necessarily anti-government. It need not even be anti-State.

The postulates of the present self-determination movement in the Philippines can be summed up as follows:

1. Genuine development means that there is consultation with the people whose ecosystem, physical habitat — in which they have established uninterrupted occupancy and stewardship — and indeed on entire material culture, stand to be affected by any project. In fact, the indigenous people should be able to propose and conceptualise alternative development projects which harmonise with their material and non-material needs, even if these may not necessarily coincide (as often they do not) with the blueprints of technocrats and economic planners.
2. Integration is still desirable. Genuine integration shall not be prejudiced by demands for self-determination — except when an indigenous movement has clearly turned separatist, or secessionist, which would imply irreconcilable ethnic interests.

In various documents prepared by the organised national minorities, it is made very clear that:

“The solution to the particular problems of national oppression faced by the indigenous national minorities shall come principally through their own definition, but with the support of the Filipino majority”, and that likewise, “the struggle for self-determination cannot but be also contributory to the Filipino people’s struggle for national freedom and democracy It is therefore an integral part of the still unfinished process of Filipino nation-building.”

That is self-explanatory. The end of minoritisation is the beginning of a truly national society. It will also mark the end of marginalisation which has, during the past 400 years, plagued both ethnic majorities and minorities. In the first place, colonialism and neo-colonialism (or imperialism) created the dichotomy between the two groups, so that full decolonisation (restructuring the State-system dominated by local and foreign elite interests), can pave the way for the dissolution of divisive ethnicism. That is, ethnicism as an expression of accumulated custom and tradition and lifeways can still be preserved within a national polity that is able to democratise and humanise development. Towards this end, the efforts of the national minorities are directed at present and in the years of struggle that lie ahead.

Notes

1. In a paper read during the First Cordillera Multisectoral Land Congress, March 1983, Ben Solang of the Montanosa Resource and Development Centre, underscored the political economy dimensions of the national minority question as being primary. "It is the marginalised economic condition of the Igorot peasant that determines the basis of their being an Igorot ethnic minority." A striking feature in his paper is a very rare reference to 'Igorot peasant society'. In current anthropology, peasant societies and ethnic or tribal societies are usually separate fields of investigation. Solang contends that the breaking down of subsistency in the Cordillera is immediately traceable to the "impingement of big business and the integration of the Cordillera villages into the market economy."
2. Those who speak of a perfectly communalistic ethnic past are called 'romanticists' by those who posit that, at least in the case of the Cordillera people of Northern Luzon, "land was not communally owned." And further: "There were class distinctions — well-defined among the settled, wet-rice cultivators and in the mining districts ... not all societies existed at a level of primitive communalism. This was true only of certain groups whose economies depended entirely on hunting and gathering, or on shifting cultivation or swidden farming. There were rich and poor — baknang and abiteg, kadangyan and nawotwot. Nevertheless, survival was assured to all who were willing to work." (see Cordillera, Communication Foundation of Asia, PCC Monograph, Vol.1, No.2, October 1986, pp.2-3).
3. In a speech in New Delhi in December 1986, founding chairperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Jose Ma. Sison, provided a most succinct description of the present epoch in Philippine history: "Marcos was just the pus: the wound is still there...."
4. In a document released in May 1986 by the Northern Luzon Commission of the Communist Party of the Philippines — New People's Army, 'rebel priest' Conrado Balweg and his comrades in the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA), were accused of creating disunity and a split within the New People's Army (NPA). Particulars of the charges against the Balweg group included: 1) Spreading the lie that the Party practiced discrimination against ethnic minority members of the revolutionary organisation, 2) magnifying some criticism raised by ethnic comrades against non-ethnic party members, in order to create animosity, and 3) branding the CPDF (Cordillera People's Democratic Front, one of 13 members of the National Democratic Front or NDF, whose leading members are the CPP and NPA as an 'instrument of the lowlanders' for taking over the wealth of the Cordillera and eventually destroying the socio-political system in the mountain region (see The CPLA: Our Investigation and Policy). Thus, the ethnic cause has been raised by the breakaway faction (CPLA) of a revolutionary organisation (CPDF) which, by having integrated itself with the Marxist national liberation movement, has presumably transcended the critical barrier of 'ethnicism'.

As of this writing, the 200-or-so-strong group of 'renegade priest' Conrado Balweg — the Cordillera People's Liberation Army or CPLA — has stopped waging war against the Aquino government and has even reportedly cooperated with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in its operation against the communist NPA. Balweg's peace negotiations with the government have broken down, allegedly because Balweg wants the CPLA placed directly under the command of President Cory Aquino as a regional peace keeping force, instead of being integrated into the regular army which is the government's position.

5. Ponciano Bennagen, Diverse But One: Building a Filipino Nation, Collectively, paper read at the 3rd Convention of the Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos (ECTF), November 1980, p.1.
6. Cordillera Society and Resolution, Lecture Series No.1, Center for Nationalist Studies of Northern Luzon, Baguio City, 1987, p.1.
7. Cordillera, op. cit., p.3
8. Bennagen, op. cit., p.11
9. "Peso 538 million allotted for Highlands," Philippine Daily Inquirer, 12 May 1987, p.7
10. "Cordillera Group Concerned Over Implications of EEC Development Aid," Philippine News and Features (PNF), Vol.III, Number 36, 11 May 1987, p.11
11. Quoted from the "Draft Declaration of Principles, Working Paper No.4," Commission on Human Rights, Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Geneva, 1985, p.2.

6

Moro ethno-nationalist movement

Carmen A. Abubakar

Early social scientists theorised that contacts between groups inevitably led to assimilation and the formation of more homogenous groups. Ethnic groups in multiethnic or polyethnic societies were expected to assimilate or integrate.¹ This thinking reflected a theoretical bias which generally predicted the demise of aboriginal or indigenous cultures under the impact of Western civilisation and modernisation. The theory was later debunked by Ralph Linton² through the data he gathered from acculturation studies among the American Indians.

The issue of ethnic resistance to integration and assimilation was first propounded by J. S. Furnivall,³ in his conception of a plural society. This he defines as "comprising two or more elements of social order which live side by side yet without mingling in one political unit." Later, these societies were characterised as largely competitive and unstable due to deep cultural cleavages.⁴ As a result, many of these societies carry within them the seed for potential communal violence as groups react to political, socio-economic and religious pressures.

Ethnic resistance was further confirmed by other social scientists. They called attention to the structured relationships between groups.⁵ For example, ethnic groups have been known to enter into symbiotic relationships with other groups for the purpose of exchanging goods and services while each maintains a separate ecological niche. Such separate groups have been variously called 'enclaves',⁶ 'nonassimilating minorities',⁷ and 'unsocialised minorities'.

Both, the nonassimilating minorities and the potential for conflict among them were evident in the newly independent nation-states which emerged after the Second World War. These nation-states were mostly former colonies of Western powers where colonial policies had arbitrarily redrawn territorial boundaries. Thus, a great majority of these nation-states now controlled territories which, prior to colonial times, were independent and sovereign States in their own right. Consequently, the

national polity contained groups which resisted State policies of assimilation and integration.

Ethnic resistance soon began to grow essentially because "State structures seldom provide for ethnic rights,"⁸ nor for that matter, are States sympathetic to ethnic aspirations for greater autonomy. The inability of States to accommodate and give redress to ethnic grievances and fulfil ethnic aspirations increasingly agitated ethnic groups into more violent protest actions directed against the State as the allocator and dispenser of power and privileges.

For this reason, communal conflicts appear to be endemic in many areas. In India, for example, communal violence reached an unprecedented height in 1984, when the confrontation between the Sikhs and government forces eventually led to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Even Britain, that bastion of Western social and civic order, reeled under the impact of communal violence during the 1981 June riots in south London where many Asians live. Thus 'ethnically inspired dissonance'⁹ has not spared developed or developing countries; ethnic conflicts are taking place everywhere in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. Ethnic resurgence is fast becoming a world phenomenon.

Since the late sixties, sporadic communal conflicts have been taking place, but seemingly these occurrences were usually flare ups that died down. In the seventies, however, these conflicts began to take on more organised forms and had gradually taken three distinct directions: Toward the achievement of special status to redress grievances; toward local autonomy; and toward independence. National liberation fronts have come up among ethnic groups that have a significant population and occupy distinct territories.

This has lately been referred to as ethno-nationalism. Ethnic groups claiming to be nations and States in the past or that have the potential of becoming one are now demanding and asserting these claims as (historic) rights to self-determination for local autonomy or independence.

The rise of ethno-nationalism in Third World countries has been associated with other societal developments such as modernisation. The transition from traditional to modern societies is often ridden with conflict, arising from competing loyalties and identities. More so if modernisation is expected to produce a unifying effect in terms of an expected dissolution of "all ties on the ethnic levels to give way to new attachments at a national level."¹⁰ In many cases, this does not happen primarily because ethnic ties have emotional, psychological, even religious depths, that are not easily severed.

Ethno-nationalism has also been associated with uneven economic development between the cities and interiors. This condition has been described as 'internal colonialism'. In some countries the newly-independent nation takes on the character of its former master and becomes a neo-colonial State. Its relation to minority ethnic groups, especially those that are culturally and territorially distinct, continues to be unequal in nature. This means that minority ethnic groups are forced to assume a

colonised status. State policies and ideologies are dominated by majority interest because majority groups have assumed political dominance and State power.

Newly independent States had to work particularly hard to develop national consciousness and nationalism, particularly in terms of integrating diverse populations and undertaking development programmes. At this stage of political development, however, there are competing loyalties and allegiance between ethnic groups and the nation-state that conflict becomes inevitable.

The Moro ethno-nationalist movement in the southern Philippines arose out of a colonial past and the subsequent development of a colonial relationship between the Moros and the national government. Such a relationship has been underlined by the economic underdevelopment of Moro areas and their inadequate political representation in the national government. For a people like the Moros, who had a well developed history of independent government, this relationship is iniquitous and oppressive and goes against their sense of self-worth. These conditions are characteristic of what the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) labeled as internal colonialism. The MNLF stresses the idea that the Moros were a nation operating within a State prior to the colonial period and had every right to assert the principle of self-determination under neo-colonial conditions.

The assertion of ethnic nationhood contradicts the basic premise of a highly unitary and centralised government which is unwilling to share power. It also goes against majority chauvinism.

Moro national history begins with the coming of Islam to the Sulu archipelago in the thirteenth century. It involves two subsequent developments: The spread of Islam to Mindanao by missionaries and political personalities; and the introduction of the sultanate as a political system. The first development established the Muslim communities or *Darul Islam* in these areas; the second organised them.

The formation of organised political communities based on religious identity and values gave Moros a sense of community and the consciousness of being an *Ummah* or a nation having its own laws and form of governance.

The Moros fought to preserve and maintain the territorial, political and religious integrity of their communities and were able to stem the tide of colonialism and imperialism for more than 300 years after 1565. But the tide soon engulfed their areas at the turn of the nineteenth century.

This was accomplished by the Treaty of Paris signed in 1898 between Spain and America, wherein Spain ceded all her Philippine colonies including the Moro areas, over which she never had complete control. When the Americans arrived to take over their new possession they had to fight a brutal war against the Moros in the south and the Filipinos in the north, before American rule could be established.

The colonial relationship between the Americans and the Moros was based on the twin policies of 'benevolence' and 'attraction' intended to make the Moros quiescent, while the colonial structures were allowed to flourish. The Moros were treated as 'wards' to be taught the niceties of Western civilisation and mode of government. Thus,

public schools were opened in Moro areas to develop new cognitive and value orientations. In addition, scholarships to the United States were made available to Moro elites.

Accompanying this programme was the declaration of Mindanao as a 'promised land', and the intensification of commercial ventures and agricultural colonies. For this purpose, the system of land ownership was altered to make communal lands available to US citizens, business corporations, and settlers from the north for private ownership.

In brief, the colonial strategy was to change Moro society, in its entirety, beginning with abolishing its politico-administrative system to subverting its socio-economic, educational and legal institutions. While American direct rule had a disastrous effect on Moro society, the creation of the Moro province¹¹ demonstrated America's recognition of the Moros' separateness and their hostile relations with the Filipinos. America continued to use the label Moro as distinct from Filipino. The Moros, however, kept up the resistance. They continued to fight against colonial policies such as the school system, military training, residence tax, forced labour and road tax, which they considered as instruments of subjugation. When independence was being discussed between the Americans and the Filipinos, Moro leaders petitioned the US President for the return of their own territories so that they could set up their own government. They held public rallies and demonstrations, but to no avail.¹²

A restive Moro population, therefore became part of the Philippine Republic; a restiveness which soon began to affect peace and order conditions in the south. The Kamlon rebellion in Sulu broke out in 1954. Meanwhile, in mainland Mindanao, problems of land grabbing began to assume grave proportions as more and more settlers penetrated Moro areas. By the 1960s, settlers had grown in population and began carving for themselves barrios, then towns, and eventually provinces within Moro areas. Cotabato and Lanao were cut up to satisfy settlers' demands for new political units. By the early 1970s, Moro areas had shrunk by 75 per cent in little over six decades. The Moros not only lost a large part of their homeland, but also the huge flow of settlers effectively rendered them a minority even in their traditional areas. The loss of territory was accompanied by bitter conflict, which evolved into a full-fledged Moro struggle in 1972.

The Moro nationalist movement

The take-off point of the Moro nationalist movement was the Jabida massacre in 1968, where a number of Moro recruits, who were supposedly part of a military project called 'Merdika' at Corregidor island, were murdered. It was never made clear what the objective of the project was nor why the recruits were summarily executed. Subsequent investigations conducted by Congress and the military did not shed any light on the incident. The trials ended in the acquittal of all accused.

This incident and its cover-up galvanised the Moros to protest actions. It forged a sense of unity among the Moros which led to two important developments: The declaration of the Muslim Independence Movement by Datu Udtug Matalam of Cotabato, and the organisation of the Moro National Liberation Front. The latter, however, proved to be of more significance to the Moro nationalist movement. The MNLF started with a batch of 90 original members but, by 1972, it had grown into a people's army to liberate the homeland.

The founding of the MNLF evolved from a collusion of events highlighted by the Jabida massacre and the 'shooting war'¹³ that was then taking place in Mindanao between the private Moro armies and settlers.

This led a group of Muslim leaders to issue a manifesto on 21 July 1971, published in the *Manila Times*. The text of this document asked the government to extend protection to its citizens regardless of religious affiliation. The significant part of the manifesto, however, reads:

"... if the government shall fail or refuse to perform its fundamental duty to all citizens, whether Muslim or Christian, if it fails to stop the criminal depredations in Muslim areas which are brazenly and openly committed with the very presence of the military and if we shall not get justice for our people through peaceful and legal means – we hereby pledge today before God, that despite our present personal and political positions, we shall do our utmost to preserve our community and land. Toward this end, we are willing and ready to sacrifice our worldly possessions and even our lives as our forebears have done before us in defense of freedom and Islam."¹⁴

There were 30 signatories to this manifesto entitled "Muslim Leaders' Consensus of Unity": 12 Maranaos, 10 Tausug, 6 Maguindanao, 1 Yakan and 1 non-Moro Muslim academician. This demonstration of a unified concern from the major Moro groups is an instance when a crisis and a feeling of shared destiny made Muslims feel one and override ethnic and political differences. It is important to note that the concern of the leaders was the protection of the Muslim *Ummah* in the Philippines. There was no talk about secession or autonomy in the manifesto.¹⁵ But the nationalist movement was already in motion. Manila in the late sixties, was a period of intense student activism and at least one of the signatories to the above manifesto was part of this milieu. Not surprisingly, then, a few young Moro intellectuals and students began to articulate the idea that "the Muslim community in the country can best be preserved if a strong armed force existed and if it were explicitly stated in the national laws that in certain areas the Muslims were to predominate politically and economically."¹⁶

The next step was almost inevitable. Some of these young Muslims came "to believe that only with independence from the rest of the country would Muslims be able to preserve their identity, to realise their aspirations and to develop the economic resources of their rich lands for the benefit of the future generations."¹⁷ This belief

formed the core of the nationalist movement, that was later translated into armed rebellion by the MNLF.

The *Bangsamoro* became the key concept in this movement. This was used to refer to the people of Mindanao and Sulu with a common cultural, religio-political and territorial identity. These people formed a free and sovereign nation long before the Spaniards came to the Philippines. The word *Bangsamoro*, therefore, encapsulates the core belief of the movement.

Nur Misuari, who became the chairman of the MNLF, articulated this concept: "The *Bangsamoro* people are one and a distinct nation endowed by sovereignty, which is one, indivisible, inalienable and imprescriptible. As such, it is at once immutable and valid for all times."

As an expression of a distinct national identity, the concept of *Bangsamoro* is thereby juxtaposed with that of the *Bangsa Filipino*, clearly a two-nation theory.

How much the concept *Bangsamoro* means to the Moro freedom fighters or *Mujahideen* was dramatically emphasised by a dying *Mujahideen* in the battle of Jolo. With his blood, he inscribed the *raison de etre* of his martyrdom: "*In kami parang sabil nagbaugbug sin hula, Bangsa, iban agama.*" (We are martyrs upholding land, nation and religion.)

The word *bangsa* is used to connote a nationality, not a race. As the MNLF claims, and with which many Moros agree, the Moros existed as a nation long before the Spaniards happened to land in Mactan in 1521. The Moro nation had by then evolved a State machinery embodied in the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao beginning around the year 1450. Thus, for 71 years prior to Magellan's arrival, these Sultanates had already fully manifested such classic elements of statehood in terms of having a distinctive people, territory and government. By the time Legazpi arrived in 1565, the Sulu Sultanate had been in existence for 115 years. The Moros have fought long 'nationalist' wars since Spanish times to the present; a total of more than four centuries.

The word *bangsa* originally referred to the class of noblemen. Thus, there was the nobility known as '*barbangsa*', or '*bangsa karatuan*', which means those belonging to or having a noble lineage. Another derivative is the word '*bangsawan*', an adjective meaning nobility or being noble or having royalty.

In the present usage the word has been given a more generic character in order to transcend ethnic, tribal or class sentiments and build a consciousness of a shared feeling of community, belonging and unity that is able to embrace all Moros.

Hula, on the other hand, refers to the territorial base without which a nation exists in a kind of limbo, without which a State cannot operate. The animal species, including man, recognise the primacy of the territorial imperative in expressing identity. In man, this territorial imperative has been elevated from the purely instinctive response or attributes present in many animals, to one that has emotional and psychological components as found in the expression of patriotism or love of country or in

nationalism. History is replete with wars fought for its sake and no doubt many more will be fought in the future.

The word *hula*, or territory, constitutes the material base or resources from which the community derives its sustenance and without which the community will not survive. *Hula* also calls to being the psychological and emotional ties that people have with the lands of their birth. Thus, while *Bangsa* on one hand constitutes the communal bond which gives rise to the sense of oneness and belonging necessary for societal formation and cohesion, *Hula*, on the other, provides the nurturing bond between the land and its people.

At the apex of a triangle of basic Moro identity is *Agama*, which in this case is Islam. Moro loyalty and identity converge at this point. Thus, Moro identity and loyalty is ultimately defined by Islam.

The establishment of Islam in Moro areas in the thirteenth century brought about "new laws, novel ethical standards and a new outlook on the meaning and direction of life."¹⁸ It was Islam that became the basis of consolidation among the Moros, the source of their institutions, the force that gave strength and determination to their struggle against the siege of Western colonialism and imperialism.

The coming of Islam is, therefore, the critical point that began to distinguish Moro society from the rest of the indigenous people inhabiting the islands now called the Philippines. It directed Sulu and Mindanao toward a different political development from that of Visayas and Luzon. This became more apparent after the Spaniards started to colonise these areas.

When the Spaniards tried to expand their colonies southward, they came across a stiff line of defense. The presence of Islam influenced Spanish strategy toward the Moros. It is not inconceivable to think that if the Americans could later re-employ the strategies they used in the American-Indian wars against the Indios and Moros here in the Philippines, then the Spaniards would have wanted to do to the Moros what they did to the Moriscos, descendants of the Moors: Christianise them and if they were not compliant, expel them from their homeland. This is something they effectively carried out in Spain and expected to do, but failed, in Moroland.

The coming of Islam influenced the Moros' geographical reference and orientation to the wider and larger community. It developed a consciousness of belonging to the Islamic *Ummah*, a concept that transcends geographical barriers. Thus, the Moros are initially oriented toward the Indo-Malay peninsula where Malacca and Sumatra were flourishing Islamic centres in the fifteenth century and ultimately to the Middle East and Arabia, the cradle of Islam and the spiritual centre of Muslims, rather than toward Luzon, with Manila as its focal point and westward to Spain and the United States as the revered mother country with the Vatican as the spiritual home. It is therefore easy to understand why, in the midst of crises and problems, Moros look across the seas to their Muslim brethren for succour and comfort and not to the Philippine government which continues to be an alien presence in their midst. It is Islam, therefore, that has kept the Moro community a fairly cohesive and

integrated society at many levels. At the highest societal level, it acts as a unifying force amongst the various ethnic groups and provides them with a common worldview. At the individual level, the Moro, because of shared religious and cultural basis, feels more easily the sense of brotherhood for other Moros, which tends to obscure personal and even ethnic differences, especially during critical times. It is this dual sense of individuality and community which enabled the Moro society to survive the long years of colonial wars.

Factionalism in the Moro nationalist movement

At the height of the colonial wars, when cooperative endeavours were necessary, Moro groups were united in their struggles. During the American period, however, the Moros became confined to their own territories as they were kept busy fighting their own wars. Their commercial activities were reduced as Western trade monopolies took over. As a result, many Moro communities became isolated and developed almost independently of each other. With the abolition of the sultanates and the close kinship and political alliances that they provided, Moro communities became more tribalistic, a peculiarity that persists to this day. Thus the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Sama and other Moro groups experience some difficulty in relating to each other. This difficulty stems from a keen sense of ethnic rivalry. This has arisen due to limited contacts and has affected relations between and among these groups.

Inter-Moro relations was the subject of a recent study conducted among 500 students belonging to four major Moro groups — the Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug and Sama.¹⁹ A majority of Maguindanao respondents recognised that ‘there are problems’ in their intergroup relations with the Maranao. One informant told the researcher, however, that “tension can be resolved, given the proper atmosphere and a chance for the two groups to talk and understand each other without the interference of any third party involved (such as the Philippine national government).”

Most Maranao respondents characterised their relationship with the Maguindanao, Sama and the Tausug as marked by tension and bad feelings. Many of the Sama group view their relations with the Maranao as difficult because “the Maranaos are hard to get along with.” Strangely enough, respondents from the Tausug, commonly perceived as being ‘troublesome’ by the other three groups, believed that “there was no problem in their relations with Maguindanao, Maranao or Sama groups.” This claim in all likelihood is an attempt to bridge ethnic gaps. The group is the strongest proponent of the Moro nationalist movement.

Intergroup relations further play a great influence in the leadership preference of these groups. The study reveals that each group considers its own member as the most worthy to be recognised by all Moro groups. However, one name emerged in common, that of MNLFC chairman, Nur Misuari.

The distribution of political positions to Moros after Aquino came to power was avidly followed and debated. One letter in a daily newspaper decried the

'overconcentration' of Maranaos in the Aquino government to the exclusion of other groups.²⁰ The favoured position of the Maranao in the national bureaucracy appears to many observers as an attempt to check the Tausug and Maguindanao groups from obtaining influential government positions. It is well known that the Tausug are the hard-liners in the independence movement, while the Maguindanao are at the head of the Islamic movement.

Ethnicity as a divisive element in Moro society is best shown in its effect on the MNLF. The MNLF started out as a united front. The membership of its central committee constituted all the major groups. Nevertheless, factionalism came to rend the central committee and divided the MNLF into three factions which are recognisably ethnic in character. Although it has been advanced that the break-up had been caused by differing strategy, it cannot be denied that the challenge to the MNLF leadership of Nur Misuari came from the Maguindanao and Maranao camps. Hashim Salamat is a Maguindanao and he has subsequently organised the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, while Dimas Pundato, a Maranao has organised the MNLF Reformist Front. The saving grace in the fragmentation of the MNLF is that each group still claims to adhere to the same goals and recognises the others as brothers-at-arms in the same struggle. But each group assumes that a single Moro leader would not be able to represent all the Moro people and to protect and advance interests. Given this situation, is there such a thing as real Moro solidarity? In spite of the divisive ethnic factor discussed earlier, the answer is, surprisingly, yes. This is because factionalism at this level has often been reduced by the force of religious commonality. Moro solidarity is therefore a fact, although it may often appear to be embattled or undermined by various political leaders and their competing personal interests. Islam becomes the final arbiter of ethnic expressiveness and the Moros rightfully regard this religious commonality as the strength of their communities. They look forward to the withering away of inter-ethnic rivalries and the establishment of a supra-identity. It is toward this end that the MNLF has advanced the concept of the *Bangsamoro*.

Polarisation

If religion is an integrating element in inter-group relations among the Moros on the first level of ethnicity, it acts as a divisive factor too. The Moros and Christians have a long history of animosity brought about by Western colonialism and imperialism.

The main distinction that characterised the Moros before, during and after the colonial period was their religion. Islam had developed a culture and a worldview of its own, significantly different from the Christian religion and the Hispanic culture and worldview brought by the Spaniards. The conflict between the Moros and the colonialists was essentially rooted in this difference, no doubt made more significant for the Spaniards by their historical experience of being conquered by the Arabs. Later, of course, the conflict took on other aspects and dimensions.

Because of the prominence of religion in the lives of both, Moros and Christians, the tendency to identify each group as belonging to one or the other faith remains strong. Moros have adhered to their religious identity more tenaciously as a way of maintaining their own cultural identities, apart from expressing their alienation and isolation from the mainstream majority which is Christian. This had made the term Filipino, which is thought to be synonymous with Christian, relatively hard to accept for many Moros. In the fifties, a Congressional committee reported that Muslims who were asked the question "Are you a Filipino?" invariably answered with a categorical, "No," adding the statement, "I am a Muslim" for more emphasis.²¹ In 1971, the Filipinas Foundation undertook a study where the same question was asked.²² As many as 65 per cent of the Muslim respondents referred to themselves primarily as 'Muslims' while 29.1 per cent accepted the label Filipino. In the 1981 study cited earlier, 89.4 per cent of 500 Moro college students disagreed to the use of Filipino as the general name that included all Muslims in the Philippines, preferring instead Muslim or Moro.²³

For the Muslims, the predominant Christian symbols of government and the society at large, which pervade not only the definition of the national identity itself but national policies and programmes, are unacceptable. For the Moros, therefore, the exhortation that 'we are all Filipinos' seems more rhetorical than real. This is compounded by the constant use of the word 'Muslim' in the media to identify criminals and Moro rebels.

The MNLF position regarding all this is significant. In an effort to broaden its base and establish a constituent of free and sovereign peoples, regardless of religious affiliation, it has tried to define the concept *bangsamoro* to include all Muslims and non-Muslims who were born before 1946, and those who consider the *bangsamoro* homeland as their own. This move tries to take away the exclusivity of the term *bangsamoro* and its synonymity with being Muslim. The acceptability of this concept remains uncertain among non-Muslims.

In fact, in the move towards autonomy, the Christians' claim to numerical majority in some areas of the autonomous regions has led to a frenzied opposition to autonomy itself. Not only do Christians not want to be included in the autonomous regions, but they have even expressed opposition to the term 'Muslim Mindanao' as applied in the 1987 Constitution. Aside from the fear that Moros once in power will discriminate against the Christians' interests, there is a strong emotional and psychological resistance to being under Moro leadership. A similar resistance was put up by the Moros upon their inclusion within the Philippine territory and political structure. This went to the extent that Moro leaders petitioned for non-inclusion, or failing that, they preferred to remain under American administration rather than under Christian Filipinos.

Christian opposition to autonomy has developed along two fronts. On the political front, there has occurred a coalition of Christian politicians seeking power within the Aquino government or outside of it. Political organisations such as the MIM,

MINSUPALA and MINDANAO are those that are essentially moving along these lines.²⁴ On the military front, there have been reports of an organised army called the Christian Liberation Army (other reports say it is the Christian Liberation Organisation, while still others refer to it as the rearming of the notorious ILAGA gang). This is allegedly funded by Christian politicians, businessmen and ex-military men in Cotabato, Davao and the Zamboanga peninsula. This army is intended to fight against the MNLF should autonomy include Christian dominated areas in Mindanao, which fall within the 13 provinces referred to by the MNLF as the Bangsamoro homeland. This recent development now places Mindanao in that unenviable position as the place with the most 'secret armies', which include the paramilitary forces operating in this area like the Civilian Home Defence Forces, the *Alsa Masa* and the various 'lost commands', private armies, and fanatic groups like the *Tadtad*.

Prospects

Since the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, the Moro Nationalist Movement has entered into a different state. Armed confrontation has been reduced and peaceful negotiations have taken place, though the prospect of armed violence is not far away.

The Tripoli Agreement was implemented by the Marcos government through Presidential Decree 1618. Ten provinces in two regions (Region 9, western Mindanao and Region 12, central Mindanao) were included in the two autonomous regions created by this decree, namely; Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

The autonomous regions were expected to "enhance the attainment of peace and order, the acceleration of socio-economic development and the resettlement of displaced persons and families." This mission seems to have remained unfulfilled. For instance, 300,000 Moro refugees in Sabah are still to be resettled; Moro socio-economic development continues to be slow; peace and order has not improved significantly.

This is because the autonomy granted these regions turned out to be meaningless in the real sense of authority or functions. It was largely known as 'paper autonomy' and was often called in jest as 'monotonous' rather than autonomous. The late chairman of Region 9, Albert Ulama Tugung, at one point confessed that "there were no clear provisions... given to the autonomous government as to the peculiar internal administrative matter that it should undertake."²⁵

In the early months after the February 1986 EDSA revolution, Moros in Metro Manila, Mindanao, and Sulu mounted popular rallies attended by thousands urging the Aquino government to negotiate with the MNLF on the basis of the Tripoli Agreement. This concerted effort prompted the new government to create a Presidential Task Force mandated to study the Tripoli Agreement. After three

months, however, the Chairman, Datu Michael Mastura, resigned stating in his letter of resignation dated 18 June that "no definitive policy actions have been made by the Office of the President, despite our several recommendations."

Substantive peace talks were finally undertaken in February 1987, after a formal meeting between President Corazon C. Aquino and Chairman Nur Misuari in September 1986 in Jolo, Sulu. This was followed by another meeting in Jeddah in January 1987, during which a document known as the Jeddah Accord was signed. The significant item in this Accord, which later gave rise to a controversy during the negotiation, reads: "Create a Joint Commission which will discuss and draft the mechanisms and details of the proposal for the granting of full autonomy to Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan, subject to democratic processes...."

According to the MNLF, a verbal commitment had been made by the government panel composed of then Presidential adviser, Aquilino Pimentel Jr., together with Agapito (Butz) Aquino and Norberto Gonzales, to grant autonomy to Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Palawan and Tawi-Tawi. This meant the inclusion of the 23 islands of Mindanao instead of just the 13 provinces named in the Tripoli Agreement. This disclosure caused a public furor and led Aquilino Pimentel Jr to issue a press statement to the effect that the government panel agreed only 'to discuss' the MNLF proposal.²⁶ Opposition leaders of the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD), however, accused the government of 'bad faith' in dealing with the MNLF. Former Assemblyman Homobono Adaza, even predicted the collapse of the talks because the government panel "made a lot of commitments they cannot fulfill."²⁷

The misunderstanding arising from the Jeddah Accord flawed the peace negotiation right from the start as each side began questioning the sincerity of the other. Eventually, as predicted, the peace talks collapsed on 9 May 1987, after three months of stalled negotiations. But outside the Jeddah debacle, there were major issues that caused the talks to fail.

One of these issues was the territorial boundary of the autonomous regions. The MNLF's final proposal was autonomy for the 13 provinces already specified in the Tripoli Agreement with no plebiscite, while the remaining 10 provinces would be subjected to a plebiscite after a transitional period. The RP panel, on the other hand, insisted on the provision of Article X of the 1987 Constitution which calls for plebiscite and majority approval before an autonomous region can be created. Furthermore, only those units which voted favourably for autonomy would be included.

This provision actually limits the granting of autonomy to predominantly Muslim provinces since Christians in Mindanao have already signified their intention to vote 'no' in the plebiscite. But the Muslim provinces which are likely to vote 'yes' are not geographically compact except for Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur are set apart by Christian dominated provinces. A further provision of Article X, Sec. 18, includes cities and geographic areas voting 'yes' also to be included in the autonomous region. This means a drastic restructuring of political units so that even *barangays* in Christian provinces with predominantly Muslim constituents voting

'yes' will be included. Such an autonomous region with disparate participating units would not be tenable.

The Tripoli Agreement, on the other hand, has identified the area of autonomy. These provinces constituted the Moro homeland. Although about 75 per cent of this territory has been taken over by migrant settlers, this situation does not alter the fact that the Moro people have historical claims over this territory.

It is unfortunate that autonomy is being understood by majority Christians simply as an arrangement to satisfy the MNLF and put the latter in positions of power over them. The fact that autonomy or self-rule can place substantive powers in people's hands, whether Christian or Muslim, and will allow decision-making processes to devolve to lower levels, is not appreciated. Its merit has been lost in the rhetoric of majority chauvinism, particularly voiced out by political interests threatened by loss of power and position.

Another issue that bogged down the negotiation is the role of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). It must be remembered that the Tripoli Agreement was signed under the auspices of the OIC, as was the Jeddah Accord. In both these instances, the government gladly utilised the mediation of the OIC to have the agreements signed.

However, the new Aquino government has been loathe to recognise the participation of the OIC in any discussion with the MNLF, claiming that this is a domestic problem which should be solved internally without interference. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that OIC mediation was requested by Marcos, so that the Peace Agreement with the MNLF could be signed. This is why the OIC became a signatory to the Tripoli Accord. Since OIC involvement has become an integral part of the peace process, the MNLF and other factions, therefore, prefer to chart the negotiation under OIC mediation. Even Hashim Salamat, Chairman of the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) is quoted as saying: "Contacts with us should be channeled through the OIC or through the World Muslim League, and if there are to be negotiations, they should be under the auspices of either of these two international organisations or both."²⁸

It is not difficult to see why the MNLF prefers OIC mediation. The OIC involvement with the Moro problem has been significant. Some member countries of OIC have been giving financial support to the MNLF, while the rest provide moral and political support. In 1976, the OIC was responsible for making the MNLF accept autonomy as it was envisioned in the Tripoli Agreement. It is also true that the OIC, as a collective body, passed a resolution in its 4th Summit Conference held at Casablanca, Morocco in January 1984, stating that "the problem of Southern Philippines should be solved within the framework of Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity."²⁹ Furthermore, to show its concern, the OIC has consistently placed the Philippine Muslim problem on the agenda of its Foreign Ministers Conference since 1973. In addition, it has granted a permanent observer status to the MNLF since 1974.

The Moro problem entered a new phase when the MNLF announced in February 1988, its plan to seek full membership to the OIC. If accepted, the MNLF would obtain not only belligerency status but gain open assistance from other countries sympathetic to the Moro cause, and would be able to open liaison offices in these countries. In addition, the MNLF would also gain international recognition and would then be able to elevate its case to the United Nations. OIC acceptance, therefore, can mean the turning point for the Moro nationalist movement.³⁰

However, the MNLF intention to apply for OIC membership is seen by many government leaders as a 'mission impossible' since the OIC charter grants membership only to States, although exceptions have been made and membership given to the Palestine Liberation Organisation and organisations like the Rabita.

For the Philippines government, a strengthening of links between the MNLF and the OIC, spells secession and outbreak of hostilities in the south. Should this happen, the military will be forced to fight a two-front war, for it is certain that the New Peoples Army (NPA) will not let the opportunity pass.

The MNLF's announcement spurred many activities at different levels of government. Ambassadors to the various Muslim countries were recalled for instructions and a diplomatic offensive was undertaken to counter the MNLF's OIC application. Speaker of the House, Ramon Mitra, and Muslim Congressmen³¹ were sent to Jeddah. Upon his return, Mitra suggested that the Philippine government apply for membership to the OIC to spike the MNLF membership bid. This suggestion drew criticism from Christians and Muslims alike. An editorial in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* dated 10 March 1988, called it 'Mitra's Joke', while Fransisco Tatad of the GAD called it a 'harebrained idea'. MNLF spokesman Datu Ray Ibrahim-Uy said it was a 'desperate move' and Abul Khayr Alonto, former MNLF vice-chairman, called it a "cheap attempt to upstage the MNLF." The government's response to Mitra's suggestion has been to assign the Department of Foreign Affairs to study the matter.

President Aquino, however, delivered a speech in Zamboanga which issued a stern warning to the OIC against backing the MNLF bid for membership:

"We appreciate the concern of the Muslim countries for the welfare of Filipino Muslims, but we ask them to consider the steps our government is taking to meet the legitimate demands and redress the legitimate grievances of our Muslim brothers. And we urge them to refrain from any action which could encourage extremists to embark on the path of violence. This government has followed a policy of peace and reconciliation. We will stick to it as best as we can. But we will fight, if fight we must."³²

Meanwhile, the government opened its socio-economic programme by announcing a Peso 1 billion infrastructure package for Tawi-Tawi consisting of improved water systems, literacy classes, mobile clinics, reforestation, and upgrading Tawi-Tawi's airport. Another Peso 1 billion was also earmarked for Mindanao, of

which Peso 55 million will go to Zamboanga city and Peso 650 million to the 12 provinces of Regions 9, 11 and 12.

These projects apparently are the vanguard of the government's solution to the Moro problems in terms of socio-economic development. Vocal Moro organisations like the Bangsa Moro Solidarity Conference (BMSC), however, point out that "the President's economic assistance project does not solve Mindanao's problems, which are political."³³

However, the government has significantly increased and consolidated its political base in the south. In the local elections held in February 1987, the five Moro provinces elected governors and mayors belonging to the government's coalition. Many of these were former Marcos men, or former rebels who have surrendered to the government and whom the ruling coalition has embraced out of political expediency. These leaders are the frontline in the government's peace initiatives and in the event of the resumption of hostilities with the MNLF, they will most probably take an active part.

Thus the government's pursuit of peace seems to revolve around two strategies; that of appeasement and concession. This attitude to the Moro issue is not new. It goes back to the 1950s, when Congress created the Commission of National Integration (CNI) following a Congressional study on the peace and order situation in Mindanao and Sulu. The same approach underlies the creation of special agencies to serve the Moros' needs, i.e., the Office of Muslim Affairs (formerly OSCIA, MMA, OMACC), the Philippine Amanah Bank, the Southern Philippines Development Authority, and the Shariah Courts. These agencies have not been successful in their avowed missions of helping the socio-cultural and economic development of the Moro people, or for that matter in solving the continuing Moro problem. But they have been successful as symbolic gestures showing government's concern for the Moros and make good propaganda material.

The passing of the autonomy provisions in the 1987 Constitution can be seen as still another concession, made under the threat of war in Mindanao, rather than out of any real appreciation and understanding of the historical and political basis of the Moro struggle for self-determination. Former Constitutional Commissioner Blas Ople, who sponsored the autonomy provision under the Committee of Local Governments, related in a recent Congressional hearing that many commissioners objected to autonomy. He added that the then Commissioner, Ricardo Romulo, challenged him during the sponsorship period to answer whether the warning about war was not blackmailing the commissioners into giving their consent.³⁴

The passage of House Bill No. 4996, creating the Islamic Investment Bank, is another pointer. Rep. Isidro Real (PDP-Laban, Zamboanga del Sur), chairman of the House Committee on Banks and Currencies has been quoted as saying that, "Congress must pass the bill because it is one of the concessions to the OIC."³⁵ Little wonder, then, that many Moros are skeptical about getting substantial and meaningful autonomy.

The Aquino government emphasises its commitment to the creation of a just and humane society, and the Constitutional provision for Muslim autonomy is being advanced as proof of its commitment. This commitment was concretised when President Aquino signed into law, on 11 March 1988, a bill creating the Regional Consultative Commission (RCC), the body which will help Congress draft the organic charter for the autonomous region in the south. Interestingly enough, the bill was timely in its appearance, just one week before the OIC meeting in Jordan.

The three rebel groups (MNLF, MILF, MNLF-RG) have rejected the RCC on the ground that "it would not be able to come up with a realistic organic charter...." Even some Congressmen from Mindanao have questioned the commissioners from their respective districts. Traditional leaders also complained that they were not represented on the body. Only the Bangsa Moro Islamic Party (BMIP) issued a statement that it would support the RCC provided its members were elected.³⁶ Notwithstanding these doubts, the government convened the RCC in March 1989.

But, regardless of the moves and countermoves of the government and the MNLF, the issue of a peaceful political settlement hinges on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. The MNLF, the OIC, and a majority of the Moros stand by this document. The government's position is in accordance with the 1987 Constitution. The question of whether the Tripoli Agreement can be reconciled to the Constitutional provisions on autonomy, therefore, becomes the crux of any future negotiation or settlement.

Notes

1. Robert Park, Race and Culture, Free Press, Glencoe, 1950.
2. Ralph Linton, Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes, Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass, 1963.
3. J.S. Furnivall, "Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy," Cambridge University Press, 1939. Cited by Hans Dieter Evers (ed), in "The Challenge of Diversity: Basic Concepts and Theories in the Study of Southeast Asian Societies," in Sociology of Southeast Asia, Readings on Social Change and Development, Oxford in Asia, Kuala Lumpur, 1980.
4. Pierre van den Berghe, Race and Ethnicity: Essays on Comparative Sociology, Basic Books, N. Y., 1970, p.14.
5. Fredrik Barth, (ed), "Introduction," in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, Little Brown Co., Boston, 1970.
6. Charles F. Keyes, (ed), "The Dialectics of Ethnic Change," in Ethnic Change, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1981.
7. Mark A. Tessler, "Ethnic Change and Non-Assimilating Minority Status: Jews in Tunisia and Morocco and Arabs in Israel," in Ethnic Change, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1981.
8. A.D. Smith, The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, p.10.
9. Walker Connor, "Ethnonationalism in the First World: The Present in Historical Perspective," in Ethnic Conflict in the Western World, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1977.
10. Anthony H. Richmond, "Ethnic Nationalism: Social Science Paradigm," ISSJ, Feb. 1987, p.6.
11. The Moro province was established by the American colonial government in 1903. This was a result of the Philippine Bill passed by the U.S. Congress on 1 July 1902, which gave recognition to the

distinction between the Moros, Pagans, and Christian Filipinos, and the necessity of providing different forms of government for the different groups of people. See Peter G. Gowing, Mandate in Moroland, Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, Q.C., 1977, p.72.

12. The Moro sentiment for non-inclusion was conveyed to the American authorities in Washington and Manila in the 9 June 1921 petition of Mindanao and Sulu Moro leaders, the Declaration of Rights and Purposes sent to the US Congress by Moro leaders in 1924; the letter of 121 Lanao datus to President Roosevelt in March 1935. US Congressional support was made through Congressman Bacon who filed a bill for the separation of Mindanao and Sulu from the emergent Philippine Republic. See Monaros Boransing "The Tripoli Agreement: A New Covenant of Philippine Nationhood and a Framework for Total Development of the Bangsa Moro," in Papers on the Tripoli Agreement, Problems and Prospects, ISIP, Q.C., 1986, p.90.
The Moros also argued for non-inclusion on the basis of territorial integrity: "It is a Moro province. It belongs to us," on cultural and racial difference; "we are a different race; we have a different religion..." on the basis of numerical superiority; "there were 335,000 Moros as opposed to 66,000 Filipinos;" the same reverse argument Christians are now advancing against Moro autonomy in Mindanao. Finally, Moros argued on sheer emotions: "I do not want any more trouble. But if it should come to that, that we shall be given over to the Filipinos, I still would fight." And "if we should be given to another, we had better all be hanged." See Peter G. Gowing, Mandate in Moroland, *op. cit.*, pp.251-252.
13. The "Shooting War" in Mindanao was started by the notorious ILAGA gang reportedly financed by a group of Christian politicians. The atrocities perpetrated by this gang on Moro communities soon led to the organisation of retaliatory Moro gangs called Barracudas and Black-shirts. The 'war' between these two groups began in Cotabato and spread to Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte and to the Zamboanga peninsula. For more accounts of this "war", see Robert D. McAmis "Muslim Filipinos in the 1970s," Solidarity, Dec. 1973, pp.3-16.
14. Cesar A. Majul, The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines, Nizan Press, Berkeley, 1985, Appendix one.
15. ibid., p.53.
16. ibid., p.63.
17. ibid.
18. Cesar A. Majul, Muslim in the Philippines, University of the Philippines Press, Q.C., 1973.
19. Abdulsiddik A. Abbahil, "The Bangsa Moro: Their Self-Image and Inter-Group Ethnic Attitudes," in Dansalan Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 4 July 1984.
20. "Letter to the Editor," Philippine Daily Inquirer, 23 June 1986, p.5.
21. Alunan Glang, Secession or Integration, Garcia Publication Co., Philippines, 1969, p.35.
22. Filipinas Foundation, Philippine Majority - Minority Relations and Ethnic Attitude, Philippines, 1975.
23. Abdulsiddik A. Abbahil, *op. cit.* 1984.
24. MIM - Mindanao Independence Movement organised by former Assemblyman Ruben Canoy. In 1986, the Organisation met in Cagayan de Oro to ratify a constitution for a Federal Republic of Mindanao.
MINSUPALA - Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan Association headed by Surigao del Norte Governor (1986) Ronaldo G. Geotina.
MINDANAO - Mindanao Advancement, Normalisation and Assimilation Organisation headed by former Misamis Oriental Vice Governor, Rufus Rodriguez, organised in 1986.
25. Albert Ulama Tugung, "The Economics of Development in Autonomous Regions," Philippine Political Science Journal, No. 10, June 1980, p.9.
26. "Government Envoys Clarify Pact with Misuari," Malaya, 10 April 1987, pp.1-6.
27. "GAD Scores Government for Dealing in Bad Faith," Malaya, 4 April 1987, p.2.
28. "Organisation of Islamic Countries: Friend or Godfather of RP Muslims?" Manila Times, 2 January 1986, pp.1-6.
29. ibid., p.6.

30. After the OIC Conference in Amman, Jordan, it was revealed that the MNLF did not file for membership after all.
31. Speaker Ramon Mitra was accompanied by Representatives Michael Mastura (PDP-Laban, Maguindanao), Abdursakur Tan (Laban, Sulu), and Amado Bagatsing (Kabaka, Manila).
32. "Cory: I won't allow a dismembered R.P," Philippine Daily Inquirer, 27 February 1988, pp.1-8.
33. ibid., p.8.
34. "Congressional Hearing of the Committee on Muslim Affairs," Batasan Pambansa, 10 March 1988.
35. "Give me a Chance, Cory Appeals to Nur," Philippine Daily Inquirer, 24 February 1988, p.9.
36. "MNLF Threatens to Form Own Consultative Council," Philippine Daily Inquirer, 16 March 1988, pp.1-8.

7

Ethnicity in Malaysia

Zawawi Ibrahim

Beyond the 'plural society'

A persistent problem encountered in the sociological studies of race relations is how to locate theoretically the problem of race in the context of macro and wider social structures:

“They have tended to study specific situations and interpret them in *ad hoc* fashion. Few attempts were made to systematically relate specific situations to the wider social structure. Such a systematic location of the specific in the general context is a task that in sociology can best be performed with the aid of theory. For it is one of the most valuable contributions in the classical traditions of Durkheim, Marx and Weber, to present a picture of the totality of social structure, showing the way in which different components of structure are related together, and the way in which social groups are located within this totality.”¹

Such a state of affairs has consequently confined the field to a rather ambiguous theoretical position, such that despite “a great amount of valuable research, the field of race relations has come to resemble a theoretical no-man’s-land between psychology, sociology, and anthropology.”² As the same writer laments:

“Part of the reluctance of ‘race’ scholars to indulge in theory construction may be the fear of cogitating themselves out of a speciality. Or, phrased

Author’s note: In the following discussion, Malaysia refers specifically to Peninsular Malaysia or what was originally ‘Malaya’.

differently, the failure to arrive at a theory of race relations may simply reflect the fact that the subject has no theoretical leg to stand on. Indeed, we could make a strong case for the position that race is only an interesting special case in a broad range of similar phenomena, hence has little claim for autonomous theoretical status. ... if race is only a specific case of more general social facts, it follows that there can be no general theory of race and race relations must be placed within the total institutional and cultural context of the society studied.”³

Such an admission implies that students of race or ethnicity must move beyond the terrains of conventional sociology of race relations into the realm of political economy, where the issue can be discussed and theoretically located in the context of a broader framework. Explaining ethnicity then is not so much an exercise with the aim of demarcating an exclusive theoretical domain called race relations, but one which seeks to resolve the ethnic question in relation to other components of the political economy such as class, the State, capital, ideology, etc. The theoretical rubric ‘plural society’ has since its creation by Furnivall,⁴ been re-formulated in various ways to become a dominant theoretical approach amongst scholars of race relations, attempting to analyse specific types of colonised societies.⁵

Thus it comes to pass that for a long time the analysis of ethnicity in Malaysia too suffered under the dead weight of the plural society approach.⁶ In 1974, a Malaysian social scientist, in a scathing attack against some of these scholars, bemoaned the state of sociology of race relations in the country and harped on the critical acceptance of the plural society framework in their work, especially their neglect of the class and foreign domination factors in their analyses.⁷ While the pluralist approach is able to highlight the conscious (mainly ethnic) ideological and political structures which are dominant in society, their links with the underlying structural and historical processes of the wider political economy are neither adequately analysed nor theorised.⁸

The rise and fall of the ‘plural society’ is another indication of the problems involved in reconstituting an autonomous theoretical area of discourse in the field of race relations.

Ethnicity in Malaysia: Historical-specificity and capitalism

“Racism (or as in our usage, ethnicity) is not dealt with as a general feature of human societies, but with historically specific racisms.... One must start from the concrete historical ‘work’ which racism accomplishes under specific historical conditions — as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation.”⁹

The social formation in question is inevitably capitalism; especially in the Third World. However:

“Racism (or ethnicity) is not present, in the same form or degree, in all capitalist formations: it is not necessary to the concrete functioning of all capitalisms. It needs to be shown how and why racism has been specifically overdetermined by and articulated with certain capitalisms at different stages of their development.... One needs to know how different racial and ethnic groups were inserted historically... as active structuring principles of the present organisation of society.... Racial categories alone will not provide or explain these. What are the different forms and relations in which these racial fractions were combined under capital? Do they stand in significantly different relations to capital? Do they stand within an articulation of different modes of production? ... How has race functioned to preserve and develop these articulations?”¹⁰

Following the above guidelines, the discussion in this part of the chapter will attempt to explore how ‘ethnicity’ became ‘inserted historically’ into the Malaysian formation through its specific colonial experience.

Colonial division of labour

Building upon the above premise of ‘historical specificity’ it is useful to re-conceptualise the Malaysian ‘plural society’ as a particular type and variant of a peripheral capitalist formation whose creation can only be adequately theorised in relation to the ‘world-historical’ expansion of capitalism into the periphery leading to the eventual ascendancy of capitalist modes over other non-capitalist modes. And though agreeing with Saul¹¹ that owing to the ‘uneven development of capitalism’, at the ideological level, there will be room for different kinds of interpellation,¹² it must also be emphasised that the specific historical way in which capitalism is mediated in each peripheral formation will generate conditions more conducive to certain forms of interpellation.

The dominant ‘ethnic interpellation’,¹³ which is the hallmark of the plural society, stems from the logic of capital itself under the specific conditions of its expansion into Malaysia. But this does not imply that there is an inherent logical connection between ethnicity and the imperatives of capital. Ethnicity assumes importance because of its coincidence with the factors which are deemed crucial for capital in a given instance; though not necessarily through conscious design or intention.

Similar to other colonial expansions, the extension of formal British political control to Malaya in the nineteenth century was spurred by its need to consolidate the raw materials (initially tin, and later rubber), required for industrial capitalism at home. The State (i.e. the colonial State) at this time became purely an instrument of

colonial capitalism. One of its initial strategies was to 'conserve' the position of the Malay traditional ruling class in their prerogatives over matters of religion and custom pertaining to their subject class, the Malays who were the indigenous peasantry.

Such a strategy, as it turned out, worked well for capital: It not only divorced the traditional rulers from the economic affairs of the colonial system by dismantling their 'feudal' rights of surplus appropriation over the subject class, but it also ensured a veneer of Malay sovereignty, however symbolic, to appeal to the '*homo hierarchicus*' structure of Malay culture or to appease any potential discontentment arising from the peasantry.

For its labour requirements, capital, through the agency of the colonial State, was not forced to pry loose the indigenous peasantry from the non-capitalist mode but this by no means implies that the latter was insulated from the penetration of capital in other forms.¹⁴ Both British economic and educational policies were oriented towards 'conserving' the Malay peasantry on the subsistence agrarian base; first, as producers of staple food for labour and capitalist reproduction in the capitalist mode of the colonial formation (tin mines and rubber plantations); and secondly, as people provided with only a rudimentary education system, more specifically oriented towards becoming 'good peasants'.¹⁵

The strategy not to dislocate the Malay peasantry for its labour needs in the capitalist mode was by no means due to the benevolence of capital as such. In the tin mines there was already a pool of immigrant Chinese labour organised and exploited by their own entrepreneurial countrymen from whom the British gradually wrested control. On the other hand, the relatively easy access to and control of immigrant labour from British-India also supported the 'basic logic of plantation production'.¹⁶

Such a situation, as has been argued elsewhere,¹⁷ was doubly advantageous for capital, for the colonial State could still make peasants 'work for capital' in other ways (as unwaged labour). Without having to incur the cost and burden of directly organising peasant production, namely the peasants' role as food crop producers,¹⁸ 'efficient, low-cost producers' in rubber smallholdings (which the Malay peasants independently resorted to as a 'rational' strategy to earn cash required now for their household reproduction in the colonial economy), or as a source of cheap and convenient seasonal labour on the plantations.¹⁹ "It was not", as a well-known economic historian summarises, that:

"British economic policy towards the different races in Malaya... herded Chinese and Indians to work in mines and plantations and compelled Malays to work in rice fields. That might have been possible in another day or age as happened with African slave labour in the Caribbeans and America, in the late eighteenth century. In the more enlightened and *laissez-faire* Victorian society from where the colonial officials come, crude policies seeking to impose an ethnic division of labour would have been morally and politically difficult to sustain. But putting together the different parts of British policy and practice

towards the various races in Malaya, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the British knew that some sort of rough division of labour amongst the races was being structured under their rule and that various policies they pursued reinforced or helped set up tendencies towards racial separation, whatever good intentions lay behind them."²⁰

Capital vs labour

Thus out of the historical specificity of the colonial process in Malaysia emerges a structural feature: 'The cultural division of labour',²¹ which is essentially an articulation between ethnicity and the economic division of labour of the colonial order. But fundamental to the whole process is not so much the logic between capital and ethnicity, but rather between capital and labour itself under the specific conditions of the Malaysian colonial experience. What is also important to note is that a logical development of this historically evolved form of relations between capital and labour (both waged and unwaged) is that at the level of production relations of the colonial formation, labour becomes segmented along ethnic lines. As Lim Mah Hui concludes:

"In the peasant agricultural sector, there is an obvious absence of a non-Malay peasantry and *rentier* class. Therefore, class relations could only develop within the Malay community, i.e. between Malay peasants and Malay landlords. Concomitantly in the capitalist sector, there is no Malay capitalist or labour class of any significance."²²

What it also means is that because of the structural isolation between non-Malay wage labour in the capitalist mode and Malay unwaged labour in the non-capitalist mode, no substantial basis of class unity could develop across ethnic lines at the level of production relations. But under these specific conditions of capitalist domination, it would be wrong to see capital as consciously seeking to pit one ethnic community against another. For what capital requires is not so much "the actual conflict between ethnic groups, but their inability to unite across class lines."²³

Thus one of the historical conditions established by colonialism in Malaysia is a situation which prevents the unity of labour across ethnic lines. It is this fact which indirectly accentuates the ethnic interpellation of labour in the Malaysian social formation. The analysis of the logic of this development must, however, move beyond a descriptive, pluralist perception of society. In capital's confrontation with both types of labour, under the aegis of the colonial State, the logic of its class basis is never questionable. Under British rule in Malaysia, the introduction of the Torrens system of land registration,²⁴ promoted the idea of private ownership, rather than the traditional notion of cultivation as a condition for control with radical implications for peasant relations to their means of production. In addition, since all land now belonged

to the State, the alienation of land also came to be governed by colonial policies which favoured capitalist interests.

The 'liberal' land policies not only made better land easily accessible to this particular class, but also encroached on some aspects of the traditional agricultural practices well adapted to the pre-colonial Malay land system, e.g. shifting agriculture.²⁵ The asymmetrical relations between capital and peasant labour, and the articulation of this relationship through the colonial State was manifested in other forms — its revenue system (low quit rent rates on land alienated to capital), its 'system of dual agricultural taxation',²⁶ and the predominant bias of colonial expenditures (such as infrastructure and agricultural development) to serve capitalist, rather than peasant interests.

The 1910 rubber boom demonstrated to the Malay peasants the viability of smallholding rubber as a new source of cash income, since paddy growing did not generate much surplus for sale.²⁷ The subsequent massive surge toward rubber cultivation, however, led to peasant collision with the class interest of plantation capital "since it meant higher land prices and competition with low cost producers."²⁸ Then when rubber restrictions came down as a result of depressed prices, it was the peasant, rather than the plantations who "bore the main, if not the entire brunt"²⁹ of the 1922 Stevenson Restriction Scheme and the 1934 International Rubber Regulation Scheme imposed by the colonial State.

The policies of new planting and replanting which followed, also generated similar bias to capital or the wealthier peasants than the peasantry as such.³⁰ The struggle between capital and labour at this level of the colonial formation was essentially a class one,³¹ but it was not participated in by non-Malay wage labour, isolated as proletarians who were involved in their own 'class contention' in the capitalist sector.

In the capitalist mode, the class struggle between non-Malay labour and colonial capital was more intense. Their "radicalisation... was facilitated partly by oppressive labour conditions, and partly by anti-colonialist labour movements in countries from which the immigrants had come."³² With the relatively isolated conditions of the plantation, the Indians were slower in organising themselves as compared to the Chinese, although once unionised, they "were among the most militant of the Malayan proletariat."³³

The colonial State in its effort to intervene in the interest of British mining capital took measures to weaken the control of Chinese capital over Chinese labour. The declining need for extra-economic forms of labour control in no small way contributed to the earlier growth of 'free labour' amongst the Chinese. And the "loosening of the ties of the Chinese working class with the Chinese capitalists eventually became reflected in exclusively labour organisations, which increasingly expressed themselves in working class militancy and political radicalism."³⁴

But after the 1930s, all forms of 'extra-economic' coercion of labour had been abandoned by the British, and though the British turned to other means of disciplining

Indian labour, free wage labour spread on the plantation. The early 1930s of the Depression also marked a turning point for the immigrant non-Malay working class who began to regard Malaya as their home, reinforced by the fact that the British had already begun to legislate against free immigration by this time. When tin and rubber recovered from the Depression and prices rose again, the rising cost of living brought out labour unrest and agitation. It was largely to counteract the growing influence of more militant labour leaders that the colonial government finally had to legislate to allow union registration in the 1930s.

It was at this point too that the Communist Party of Malaya (MCP) was formed and "began to lead and organise the workers struggle."³⁵ The Malayan General Labour Union (GLU), formed in 1934, became one of its most important united front organisations, which began to provide strong organisational alliances between the non-Malay working class coordinated by the MCP. After the Second World War, about 90 per cent of all organised workers in Malaya were said to belong to GLU, which was not only sympathetic to communism, but also generally militant in nature.

Finally, to counteract the intense class struggle and non-Malay labour solidarity, the colonial State began to introduce various restrictive legislative measures, which eventually succeeded in breaking up and de-registering the immediate post-War politically left-oriented union movement. Indeed, by 1940, all strikes were banned by the colonial government. By 1948, a state of emergency was declared by the government, and many of the union cadres of GLU left for the jungles to join hands with the banned MCP to wage guerilla warfare which lasted until 1960.³⁶ During the emergency, the colonial government, under the tutelage of a Trade Union Advisor for Malaya (TUAM), "proceeded to reconstruct a more compliant and docile trade union movement."³⁷ Colonial capitalism did not totally do away with the role of local elites and domestic economic classes so long as they remained subordinate to, and as compradors of foreign capital. Thus, the Western-educated Malay elites were also given a place as junior administrators in the colonial bureaucracy.³⁸ The role of Chinese capital, dominant earlier in tin production, was soon subordinated to British capital,³⁹ but was given room to carve a niche for itself in the circuit of merchant capital.

At both, political and economic, levels of social formation, the role of the Malay elite and Chinese merchant capital was essential for the reproduction of the colonial political economy, and, indirectly, of capital at the centre. But while at the level of production relations, historically, there was no scope for any significant class-based interaction and unity between Malay peasants and immigrant wage labour, while at the level of exchange relations, the interaction between Malays and non-Malays was a confrontation between the peasantry and Chinese merchant capital. Here the indigenous peasantry (already neglected and insulated from the mainstream of development under colonial rule), was confronted by the relatively dominant position of those Chinese who had entrenched themselves, and been allowed to flourish in this circuit of capital as businessmen, traders, middlemen and shopkeepers.

It is here that Furnivall's earlier analysis⁴⁰ hits home, for it is in the domain of market relations that economic inequalities appear to be based on ethnicity, and are emphasised and visible as such in the daily life of the Malay peasantry. As Lim Mah Hui again indicates; "... the Malay peasant producers come into contact with the non-Malay traders either as producers or consumers. At both levels, he (sic) is a price taker and exploited by traders who probably charge more for the consumer goods and intermediate inputs required and pay less for the agricultural produce offered."⁴¹

The extension of this ethnic 'confrontation' into the politics of the plural society is a logical development of the initial conditions laid down by colonialism. The plural society in this respect is not simply the creation of capitalism; it is a type of peripheral capitalism which has been embedded with the 'conservation-dissolution' effects of a particular kind. And this through the process of capitalist domination in its various 'stages of articulation', with the non-capitalist modes of production on the periphery.⁴²

The subsequent development of ethnicity in the Malaysian social formation assumed a predictable pattern. The dominance of ethnicity became elaborated and accentuated by various socio-economic and political processes. The politics of decolonisation and nationalism found expression in strong ethnic terms, articulating the economic plight of the Malays (as 'sons of the soil'), and specifically of the Malay peasantry against the more economically dominant position of the immigrant communities, especially the Chinese.⁴³ The proposal by the colonial government of a 'Malayan Union' which attempted to reduce the political status of the aristocratic traditional ruler, for instance, had to be abandoned or face the wrath of the Malays at what they perceived to be an attack on Malay sovereignty. The politicisation and mobilisation of the Malays before independence drew not only on the taken-for-granted traditional loyalties between the Malay masses and their rulers, but also gained added momentum from their need for an ethnic 'protector' against the perceived threat from other communities.⁴⁴ Such protection became the basis for the continuing loyalty and support of the Malay masses for Malay political leaders, and for ethnic parties which could promise them such protection in the 'new State'.

For the Malays, it was a victory of the English-educated elites with close links to the traditional ruling class. But a little less than two decades before independence there did emerge a 'class' Malay challenge against this British-supported elite. These dissidents comprised the Malay-educated intelligentsia drawn mainly from the peasantry but were strongly influenced by the left-wing of the Indonesian nationalist movement. Their ideal was to throw off the yoke of colonial rule through a union with Indonesia in a greater *Malaysia Raya* (Pan Malaysianism). This radical Malay intelligentsia was against the alliance forged between the British and the traditional rulers and the English-educated elite. As a result they came under cautious surveillance by the British and were also distrusted and feared by the majority of Malays who found their views too radical.⁴⁵ It was obvious that they had misjudged the 'ideological domination'⁴⁶ of the traditional rulers over the peasantry, especially the

protector role perceived by the Malay masses. Thus the 'class contention' articulated by the Malay intelligentsia suffered from the same fate as the class struggle shown by labour against colonial capitalism and the colonial State.

What became the order of the day through political independence was the institutionalisation of formal communal politics as legitimate — a feature which has now become so embedded and integral to the whole Malaysian political process, that it almost has its own autonomous determination. It is, however, wrong to divorce the explanation of the evolving communal politics from the configuration of class contention that preceded this development, a point well taken in the following analysis:

“Yet the very formation of communally-based political parties, and the subsequent structuring of Malayan political life along communalistic lines, has itself been closely related to the class struggle that was taking shape. If it is evident that all three dominant political parties relied overwhelmingly on racially-oriented political programmes and ideologies, this has developed in a specific context: in which UMNO, MCA and MIC⁴⁷ were attempting to counter organisations that were appealing to the class interests of the majority sections of each ethnic group. Communal politics can thus be seen as both, a consequence of evolving class conflicts, as well as a specific means of participation within that conflict.

“This suggests that the striking dominance of communalistic currents in the political life of the country ever since the early 1950s cannot be explained without reference to the consistent and regular suppression by the State of attempts at mobilisation along class lines. (Indeed it can be said that the 'class struggle' has often been over the very existence of class organisations' the role of communal politics in this regard does not need repeating).”⁴⁸

Subjective domains: Ethnic interpellations

In post-colonial Malaysia, apart from its communal-based parties, ethnicity has also become 'objectified' into the other components of the 'superstructure'. The constitution, the education system, its development policies (the latest being the New Economic Policy), all incorporate some form of ethnic dichotomy between Malay (Bumiputras) and non-Malays (non-Bumiputras).

Social actors are predominantly reconstituted as ethnic rather than class subjects. Conflicts become predominantly expressed in ethnic terms (e.g. the 13 May 1969 racial riots), even though their causes may be deep-rooted. On the ground, perceptions based on stereotypes abound. Hence “Chinese are rich” or “Malays are poor”; “Chinese control the economy” or “Malays have political power.” People tend to impute race to anything; thus when a gun-toting Malay soldier ran amok recently in Kuala Lumpur, the whole city lay in fear and anxiety expecting a racial riot. (Under

such circumstances, it can also be perceived as 'legitimate' for the government to detain citizens under the ISA [Internal Security Act] on the ground of causing 'racial tensions' in the country.)

Communal politics, in no small measure, contributes to the 'ethnic interpellation' on the grassroot: "The development of communal politics in the country has great impact on the villagers and causes stronger group identification to take place on the basis of race rather than class ... political expressions and movements that are based on class ideology have not been able to gain a foothold among the villagers...."⁴⁹

Recent developments

In explaining the genesis of ethnicity in Malaysia, one has to understand the nature of capitalism itself under the specific historical conditions of how it was mediated and transplanted to the Malaysian situation. This we have done, and in the process we have shown how ethnicity has become both an objective as well as a subjective feature of society. However, the picture is incomplete without a discussion of some of the important qualitative changes that have been generated as a result of the progressive development of capitalist relations in the Malaysian social formation

We have established that the fundamental class contention which occurred during the colonial period is between capital and labour. It is essential for capital through the machinery of the colonial State to subordinate labour (both waged and unwaged) and any form of class resistance emerging from the dominated classes (non-Malay proletarians and Malay peasantry), though with far-reaching implications in relation to ethnicity/ideology in society. The contradictions between capital and labour will always remain primary in a capitalist society. But the present conjuncture of capitalist development in post-colonial Malaysia, has brought another form of contradiction and class contention to the fore, and like the former, its articulation is also in ethnic terms.

The factors behind this new development lie partly with the transition from colonialism to independence, with the State now being physically managed by an indigenous governing class, and hence having some form of relative autonomy from the instrumental dictates of foreign capital. On the other hand, the presence and growth of national capital (Chinese comprador and lately, since the 1970 New Economic Policy [NEP], State-sponsored Malay capital), capital is no longer 'hegemonic' but 'fractionalised'. But there is nothing 'ethnic specific' to this above feature of the Malaysian capitalist State, for as Poulantzas has argued, the State in a capitalist society is not easily the instrument of a unified capitalist class, but constitutes diverse fractions, each standing in contradictory relations to another.⁵⁰ But under the specific historical conditions of the development of capitalism in Malaysia, the process has become articulated with ethnicity.

Independence in Malaysia was essentially a class compromise between Malay political power, Chinese comprador and British capital. This compromise took place

in the context of an economy dominated by foreign and Chinese interests, but with an underdeveloped predominantly Malay peasant base and the absence of a Malay bourgeoisie. By 1957, when British rule formally ceased, government was granted to the political coalition – the Alliance, comprising three ethnic party components, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC).

The UMNO embodied the interests of the Malay ‘administrators’, a narrow brand of Malay nationalism, which was, however, successful in rallying Malay support as a champion and protector of Malay rights. But “its political ascendancy within the Malay community as a whole, only occurred in the context of the severe suppression by the colonial State of the emerging radical Malay nationalist movement.”⁵¹

Both the MCA and the MIC rested on narrow class bases. The former from the various sectors of the Chinese business community, as a way of “countering the left-wing sympathies prevalent within the Chinese community”,⁵² whilst the latter “represented a variety of small capitalist and professional interests” hardly drawing “any support from the bulk of the (Indian) community, engaged in plantation labour”.⁵³ Under this compromise, which was eventually enshrined in the Constitution, the future preservation of Malay ‘special rights’⁵⁴ was exchanged for the granting of qualified citizenship to the non-Malays (and by implication the right over their accumulated wealth in the country).

Under this uneasy alliance, the State, dominated by the Malay ruling fraction, came under pressure. Its legitimacy with the Malay voters (both the peasantry and the rising middle class), rested on solving two essential problems – Malay (rural) poverty and the absence of a Malay capitalist class.

With the first, it was not until 1965, that budgetary allocations actually accorded primary importance to rural development despite it being the second prong of the post-colonial State development strategy. Since 1965, land development took the largest slice in the rural development allocation. But “limited by the class interests of the ruling party”⁵⁵ and the type of development orientations adopted,⁵⁶ notwithstanding “the increasing expenditure of the State in rural areas, its strategy saw the increasing deterioration of the majority of the population, both in relative and absolute terms. For example, the average income of the bottom 10 per cent of all households decreased by 31 per cent, from \$49 to \$33 per month, between 1957–1970...income inequality worsened for the total population as well as within each community, with the Malays taking the lead.”⁵⁷

With the second problem, the post-colonial State was constrained by the nature of compromise underlying the Alliance, marked by “first, the basically ‘laissez faire’ policies towards accumulation by foreign interests and by the predominantly Chinese local capitalists, and second, the free hand allowed to the predominantly Malay bureaucratic middle class to expand and consolidate itself.”⁵⁸

Efforts to create a Malay capitalist class were “circumscribed by the State’s long-standing commitment to ensure continued capital accumulation by the stronger

and longer established business interests."⁵⁹ Though no Malay capitalist class was created, these efforts, however, helped to increase "the ranks of the Malay middle class, especially the bureaucratic middle class," which "provided important support for the then nascent bureaucratic capitalists."⁶⁰

The latter began to make their presence felt by the mid-60s, and the first serious expression of their demand and plight was made at the First Bumiputra Economic Congress in 1965, attended mainly by Malay bureaucrats and politicians — and the discontent that was increasingly felt by the aspiring petty bourgeoisie was articulated mainly in racial terms: "*Bumiputras* are in disarray and diffident (sic), dismayed and behaving like foreign interlopers in the urban *non-Bumiputra* commercial and industrial life. They have seen so many failures in the face of stiff competition from a strongly-entrenched 'enemy'."⁶¹

In the 1968 Second Bumiputra Economic Congress, there was an open demand for an end to "an unregulated competitive capitalist system", for it was clear that "the overall creation of a viable class of Malay capitalists was thwarted,"⁶² unable to challenge the 'hegemony' of foreign capital and local Chinese capital aligned with it. Indeed by 1969, the year of the major racial riot in Malaysia, only 1.5 per cent of the total share capital in public limited companies was owned by Malays, compared to 22.5 per cent by the Chinese and 62.1 per cent by foreign capital.

As Jomo remarks: "This limited Malay participation... could not possibly satiate the rising expectation of the rapidly growing (Malay) middle class. Frustrated ambitions in such quarters fueled the apparently 'extremist' challenge in the late sixties by the so-called 'Young Turks' or 'ultras' against the established UMNO leadership. The latter was depicted as having sold out 'Malay interests' to non-Malays, especially Chinese."⁶³

On the other hand, "Confronted with an avowedly pro-Malay government which appeared to be advancing the interests of Malays over those of other races — e.g. by provision of 'special rights', ethnic employment quotas, etc. non-Malay resentment against the system and the policies of the State also took on an ethnic character."⁶⁴

In the meantime, apart from the declining household incomes already mentioned, the fluctuating and declining process of the 1960s also generated widespread rural landlessness and rural-urban migration, further swelling the urban situation. The industries established under the 1957-1969 Import Substitution Industrialisation strategy could not absorb this flow of job-seekers as they could no longer be sustained by domestic demand. Unemployment in general rose and urban unemployment in particular soared to 10 per cent and though this mainly affected the Chinese, it was also accentuated by Malay migrants.⁶⁵ The latter "were encouraged to perceive their exclusion from jobs as being racially motivated," especially confronted by the 'impregnable' appearance of a non-Malay private capitalist sector.⁶⁶

The above economic and social conditions made the urban areas "a hot bed of political ferment".⁶⁷ The absence of a viable Malay capitalist class was increasingly posed as the reason for the lack of job opportunities for a burgeoning Malay

proletariat in the city. At the same time, the Chinese saw their ineffectiveness as being due to the weak MCA position in the Alliance Coalition, which had resulted in the strengthening of two predominantly Chinese-based political parties, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Gerakan.⁶⁸ Indeed, in the 1969 general elections the MCA lost the urban areas to the Gerakan and the DAP, whilst in a number of rural constituencies, Malay opposition, the Islamic Party, won these seats from the UMNO. The rest is history – victory marches by DAP supporters in the capital city triggered the 1969 race riots, after which parliamentary rule was suspended for several years with the imposition of emergency rule by the State.

The May 1969 riots provided the State the opportunity to move more aggressively to promote and cater to the demand of the aspiring Malay capitalist faction, through the formulation of the New Economic Policy in 1970. Briefly, the main goals of the New Policy are to eradicate poverty irrespective of race and to restructure society such that there will be less identification between ethnicity and occupation, and most importantly, to create a Malay industrial and commercial class.

The direct participation of the State in promoting Malay capital is such that by 1990 corporate share ownership in the country would be divided thus: 30 per cent for Malays, 40 per cent for non-Malay Malaysians and 30 per cent for foreigners. However, three-fourths of the targeted 30 per cent of Malay ownership would be held in trust by government agencies designated as 'Malay interests' (primarily in the form of public enterprises), while the remaining one-fourth would be held by Malay individuals.⁶⁹

Thus the post 1970s saw an explosion of public enterprises operating in almost every sector, such as Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), Perbadanan Nasional (National Corporation, PERNAS), Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Council of the People's Trust, MARA), Urban Development Authority (UDA), Lembaga Padi Negara (National Paddy Authority, LPN) and State Economic Development Corporations, etc., funded by the State.⁷⁰ The direct participation by the State in capital accumulation on behalf of the Malays has generated what has been termed as a 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie' (after Issa Shivji's work on Tanzania) which is "a single class fraction distinguished by its particular reliance upon financial and political sponsorship by the State for its accumulation of wealth."⁷¹

It would appear that the 'relative autonomy' provided by the post-colonial situation has enabled the State (through Malay political power) to assert its alliance more effectively with the Malay fraction of capital. But this must not simply be seen as "the sole result of the desire by those in political control of the State to create an 'economic base' for themselves, with the State becoming its 'pliant instrument'."⁷² It was also the outcome of "the culmination of complex processes of class contention, which have their roots in the colonial era."⁷³ Specific to the Malaysian situation, we have seen that these class contentions had ethnic outcomes.

It is also important to consider “the material conditions that allowed the State bureaucrats to behave the way they did,”⁷⁴ an aspect which suggests that:

“The NEP is the reaction/response of the State to the ‘tensions and contradictions at the level of the social and political struggle’ (after Fortin), engendered by the model of capital accumulation pursued at that time. Expressed in ethnic, rather than in class terms, the situation has allowed the State managers to achieve a certain degree of autonomy in solving these contradictions according to their own perceptions of what these are For one thing, the State managers realised that to allow for the continued valorisation and accumulation of capital, the process of surplus generation (and exploitation of the masses) cannot revert to its pre-1969 form. A new or modified set of relations between capital and labour had to be created that would seem ‘legitimate’ to labour to allow its continued domination by capital. The formation of a Malay or *Bumiputra* fraction of capital was what the State managers hoped would help solve the problem, and since there was no viable Malay capital that could expand within ‘one generation’ ... they saw it as being the State’s responsibility to play that role.”⁷⁵

Conclusion

In the end the logic of the State is to provide the platform on which dominant class interests towards capital accumulation can be realised. Thus, even though this new assumption of the State as accumulator has obviously encroached upon the domain of Chinese capital, and has generated a conflict situation which may be ‘ethnically’ interpreted or have racial repercussions at the political level,⁷⁶ it also means that the State now is more and more involved in legitimising the capitalist mode in which it has a stake. The present (post 1970) export-oriented industrialisation drive embarked upon by the Malaysian State not only requires docile and cheap labour, but as has been shown elsewhere,⁷⁷ such a process further strengthens and accentuates ‘corporatism’ as a dominant feature of the State, having to implement ‘structural adjustment strategies’ that have emerged as part of a New International Division of Labour. What with the low-growth global recession impact, or the State’s flirtations with the idea of the Newly Industrialised Country (NIC) status – the thrust towards heavy industrialisation being its recent component – they all have combined to create new relaxations and dependence on the role of foreign capital in Malaysia.⁷⁸ The interests of the tripartite alliance – the State, the local bourgeoisie and their dominant international counterparts – crystallising, as it were, through the new accumulation-cum-industrialisation process spearheaded by the State, also means that the State will have to be more involved in the old task of curtailing the development of class-based labour and political movements again, as well as controlling other ‘people vs power’ struggles opposed to the increasing corporatism

and authoritarianism of the State. If the question of persistent poverty is not resolved by 1990 as promised in the NEP, much social unrest will also come from the peasantry, especially if they feel that the larger slice of the pie has gone towards the creation of the Malay capitalist class.⁷⁹ At the same time, the continuous ideological reproduction of the State through ethnicity also means that the State may have to prevent racial conflict and tensions arising "from its own political strategy".⁸⁰ Recent developments indicate that the utilisation of the State repressive apparatus may very well be on the increase in the future.⁸¹

Notes

1. Sami Zubaida, "Introduction," in Race and Racism, (ed) S. Zubaida, Tavistock, London, 1970, p.1.
2. Van Den Berghe, Race and Racism, John Wiley, New York, 1967, p.6.
3. ibid.
4. J. Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1948.
5. L. Kuper and M.G. Smith, (eds) Pluralism in Africa, University of California, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969.
6. M. Freedman, "The Growth of Plural Society in Malaya," Pacific Affairs, 33, 1960.
C. Enloe, Multi-Ethnic Politics in Malaysia, Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.
J. Lent, (ed.) Cultural Pluralism in Malaysia, Special Report No.14, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois Univ., 1977.
C. Nagata, Pluralism in Malaysia: Myth and Reality, Contributions to Asian Studies, 7, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1975.
R.J. Vasil, Politics in a Plural Society, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1961.
7. Rahman Hj Embong, "A Comment on the State of Sociology of Race Relations in Malaya," Jurnal Antropologi dan Sosiologi, 3, 1973/74.
8. B. Magubane, "Pluralism and Conflict Situations in Africa: A New Look," African Social Research, 7, 1969.
P. Cox, "The Question of Pluralism," Race 2, 4, 1971.
M. Legassick, "The Concept of Pluralism: A Critique," in African Social Studies: A Radical Reader, (eds) Gutkind & Waterman, Heinemann, London, 1977.
9. Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism, UNESCO, 1980, pp.336-338.
10. ibid., pp.338-340.
11. J. Saul, "The Dialectic of Class and Tribe," Race and Class, 1,4,1979.
12. As pointed out by Saul: ... we can now pinpoint a somewhat different simultaneity of contradictions as illuminating the ideological terrain created by the uneven development of capitalism: there will be room both for 'interpellations' attendant upon the class contradictions inherent in the global reality of capitalism (e.g. ... peasants and workers constituting themselves as 'class conscious' subjects) and for 'interpellations' attendant upon the 'centre-periphery' contradiction. ... on the specific terrain of the centre-periphery contradiction, an ethnic-interpellation is at least as likely a possibility as a 'new nation' interpellation. For ethnicity can often draw upon much more proximate and recognizable ingredients - language, symbols, ties of kin both real and imagined - in defining itself and recruiting 'subjects' (Saul 1979: 356).
13. ibid.
14. Zawawi Ibrahim, "Perspectives on Capitalist Penetration and the Reconstitution of the Malay Peasantry," Jurnal Ekonomi Malaya, 5,1982., K.S. Jomo, "A Question of Class," Capital, the State and Uneven Development in Malaya, Oxford University Press, Singapore 1986.

- Shamsul Amri, "The Development and the Underdevelopment of the Malaysian Peasantry," Journal of Contemporary Asia, 9,4,1979. R. Bach, "Historical Patterns of Capitalist Penetration in Malaysia," Journal of Contemporary Asia, 6,4,1976.
15. W. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism, Oxford University Press, K. Lumpur, 1967.
 16. R. Bach, op. cit., 1976, pp.470-471.
 17. H. Bernstein, "Notes on Capital and the Peasantry," Review of African Political Economy, 6, 1976. Zawawi Ibrahim, op. cit., 1982, p.73.
 18. The colonial efforts to improve native agriculture in Malaya, have for instance, been described "to be more in a way of half-hearted, disjointed and niggardly measures rather than a concerted programme." (Lim Teck Ghee, Origins of a Colonial Economy, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, 1976, p.141. 1976).
 19. Zawawi Ibrahim, op. cit., 1982, p.70.
 20. Lim Teck Ghee, "British Colonial Administration and the Ethnic Division of Labour in Malaya," Kajian Malaysia (Journal of Malaysian Studies), 2, 2,1984, pp.63-64.
 21. M. Hechter, "Group Formation and the Cultural Division of Labour," American Journal of Sociology, 84, 2, 1978.
 22. Lim Mah Hui, "Ethnic and Class Relations in Malaysia," Journal of Contemporary Asia, 10, 1, 2, 1980.
 23. ibid., p.144.
 24. C. Meek, Land, Law and Customs in the Colonies, Oxford University Press, London 1946, p.40.
 25. K.S. Jomo, op. cit., 1986, p.129.
 26. Lim Teck Ghee, op. cit., 1976, p.129.
 27. J.H. Drabble, Rubber in Malaysia 1876-1922, Oxford University Press, K. Lumpur, 1973, pp.72-73.
 28. Mohd Ikmal, "The Dialectics of Ethnic and Class Conflicts: Some Illustrations from the Malaysian Case," Paper presented at UNITAR Conference, New Delhi, March 11-17, 1980.
 29. K.S. Jomo, Class Formation in Malaysia: Capital, the State and Uneven Development, Ph.D. thesis, Harvard, 1977.
 30. Lim Teck Ghee, Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya 1874-1941, Oxford Univ. Press, Kuala Lumpur 1977.
 31. For an analysis of peasant symbolic opposition against colonial capital, see Zawawi Ibrahim and Shaharil Talib, "Neither Rebellions nor Revolutions: Everyday Resistance of the Malay Peasantry Under Capitalist Domination," Ilmu Masyarakat, 2, 1983. Also Shaharil Talib, "Voices from the Kelantan Desa," Modern Asian Studies, 17,2,1983; idem, "Peasant Anger Throughout the Ages: An East Coast Malay Peninsular Experience," Malaysia in History, 28,1985; idem After its Own Image: The Trengganu Experience 1881-1941, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1984.
 32. Hua Wu Yin, Class and Communalism in Malaysia: Politics in a Dependent Capitalist State, Zed Books, London, 1983, p.49.
 33. ibid.
 34. K.S. Jomo, op. cit., 1986, p.176.
 35. Hua Wu Yin, op. cit., 1983, p.67.
 36. Ali Raza, "Legislative and Public Policy Development in Malaysia's Industrial Relations," The Journal of Developing Areas, 3,1969.
 37. M. Rudner, "Malaysian Labour in Transition: Labour Policy and Trade Unions, 1955-1963," Modern Asian Studies 7,1,1973, p.21.
 38. W. Roff, op. cit., 1967.
 39. K.S. Jomo, op. cit., 1986, ch.7.
 40. J. Furnivall, op. cit., 1948.
 41. Lim Mah Hui, op. cit., 1980, p.143.
 42. After Rey in A. Foster-Carter, "The Mode of Production Controversy," New Left Review, 107, 1978.
 43. W. Roff, op. cit., 1967.
 44. C. Muzaffar, "Protector?," Aliran, 1979.
 45. W. Roff, op. cit., 1967, p.255.
 46. Hua Wu Yin, op. cit., 1983, p.63.

47. See page 136 of this chapter for clarification of communal-based parties.
48. T. Salem, "Capitalist Development and the Formation of the Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie in Peninsular Malaysia," Kajian Malaysia (Journal of Malaysian Studies), 1, 2, 1983, pp.88-89.
49. Syed Husin Ali, Malay Peasant Society and Leadership, Oxford Univ. Press, K. Lumpur, 1975, pp.100-101.
50. N. Poulantzas, "On Social Classes," New Left Review, 78, 1973.
51. T. Salem, *op. cit.*, 1983, p.87.
52. *ibid.*, p.88.
53. *ibid.*
54. Special Rights for the Bumiputra (which literally means 'son of the soil') as defined in the Constitution specifically refers to their preferential treatment in the awarding of scholarships, admissions into the civil service, granting of permits and licences for the operation of businesses.
55. Lim Mah Hui and Canak, "The Political Economy of State Policies in Malaysia," Journal of Contemporary Asia, 11,2,1981, p.213.
56. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, RMK: Tujuan Dan Pelaksanaannya, Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka, K. Lumpur, 1977.
57. Lim and Canak, *op. cit.*, 1981, p.213.
58. K.S. Jomo, "Restructuring Society: The New Economic Policy Revisited," Persatuan Ekonomi Malaysia Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 1978, p.5.
59. *ibid.*
60. *ibid.*, p.6.
61. Cited in Lim and Canak, *op. cit.*, 1981, p.213.
62. *ibid.*
63. K.S. Jomo, *op. cit.*, 1978, p.7.
64. K.S. Jomo, *op. cit.*, 1977, pp.42-43.
65. Redha Ahmad, "Capital Accumulation and The State in Malaysia," Ilmu Masyarakat, Journal of the Malaysian Social Science Association, 8, 1985, p.17.
66. K.S. Jomo, *op. cit.*, 1977, p.42.
67. Redha Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 1985, p.17.
68. R.S. Milne and D.K. Mauzy, Politics and Government in Malaysia, Univ. of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1978, pp.142-164.
69. T. Salem, *op. cit.*, 1983, p.94.
70. Lim and Canak, *op. cit.*, 1981.
71. T. Salem, *op. cit.*, 1983, p.96.
72. Redha Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 1985.
73. T. Salem *op. cit.* 1983, p.93.
74. Redha Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 1985, p.11.
75. *ibid.*, p.19.
76. Lim Mah Hui, "Capitalism and Industrialisation in Malaysia," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, 14,1,1982; Also Lim and Canak, *op. cit.*, 1981.
77. Higgott and Robinson, "Theories of Development and Underdevelopment: Implications for the Study of Southeast Asia in Southeast Asia," Essays in the Political Economy of Structural Change, (eds) Higgott and Robinson, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1985, pp.38-552.
78. Johan Saravanamuttu, "The State, Authoritarianism and Industrialisation: Reflections on the Malaysian Case," paper presented at the 3rd Malaysian Social Science Association, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1-2 Dec. 1986.
79. Zawawi Ibrahim, "Rich Man, Poor Man - NEP Equation," Fifth Column Article, Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 June 1985. Also Zawawi Ibrahim, "Malay Peasant Consciousness: People Vs. Power," Inside Asia, No. 5, Sept.-Oct., 1985.
80. M. Brennan, "Class, Politics and Race in Modern Malaysia," Journal of Contemporary Asia, 12, 2, 1982.
81. For an analysis of recent developments, see Saravanamuttu, *op. cit.*

8

Taiwan's aborigines and their struggle towards radical democracy

Chiu Yen Liang (Fred)

The Kuomintang, ever since it was defeated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on the Chinese mainland in 1949, and fled to Taiwan, has ruled that island with an iron hand. A rule of martial law with a garrison command control system was imposed upon the populace for the prevention of 'communist insurgency'. It was only in July 1987, under the accumulated pressure of waves of protests and demonstrations, that this ruling regime was forced to lift martial law. As a face-saving device, officials claimed that the lifting of martial law was in fact a sign of Taiwan's socio-economic and political development, and therefore a show of self-confidence. Nevertheless, it was clear that the Kuomintang's 38-year-long monopoly over power and social resources had been broken.

However, this victory was one that belonged exclusively to the island's Han-Chinese majority and its bourgeoisie. It did not involve either the socially underprivileged or the aborigines.

For Taiwan's aborigines, Kuomintang rule has meant a warping of their social existence; they have had to face what has been described "as a deadly crisis of genocide".¹ This genocide is evident in terms of various developments.

Demographic trends

According to demographer Jen-ying Wang,² during the period 1906-64, the population of aborigines doubled from 113,163 to about 234,920. He says that around 1956, the natural increase rate was over three per cent, which signified a 'population explosion'. If this trend were to have continued, the aborigine population would have doubled every 25 years; i.e., in 1990 it would have touched 440,000. However, in 1988 the total aborigine population, according to figures released by the government, is just slightly over 300,000. In other words, during the period 1964-1988, the aborigine

population grew at a rate of just one per cent. What had been happening? Wang seeks to explain it in this way:

“In 1956–1964 the average natural growth rate in high–mountain tribes (i.e. aborigines; my note) approximated 30/1000. However, members who married with ‘plains–people’ (i.e. Han–Chinese who lived in the coastal plains; my note) and moved out from high–mountain tribe communities and resulted in changing identity (lost the identity as mountain people) amount to 5/1000 per annum. Accordingly, the population increase rate reduced to 24/1000 per annum.”

What ‘marry with plains people’ really meant in the majority of cases was that aborigine girls had been purchased by Han military personnel – the resulting ‘changing of identity’ is, in fact, but one form of social dislocation of Taiwan’s aborigines.

Thus, in 1900, the aborigines constituted 3.7 per cent of the total population in Taiwan.³ Three quarters of a century later, in 1977, they constituted only 1.77 per cent of the total population.⁴ This ratio has been decreasing steadily in the last 10 years.

The exodus to the cities

In 1970, 42.5 per cent of the 113,572 aborigines were forced to join the exodus from their mountain homes.⁵ In that year, three times more aborigines moved into the slums of big cities than the number in 1962. And only six years later, eight times the number in 1971, flooded the city slums all over the island. According to Taiwan Provincial Government statistics, in 1980 the male net emigration rate of the aborigines reached 12.8 per cent, and that of females was even higher at 21.4 per cent, mostly aged between 15–35.

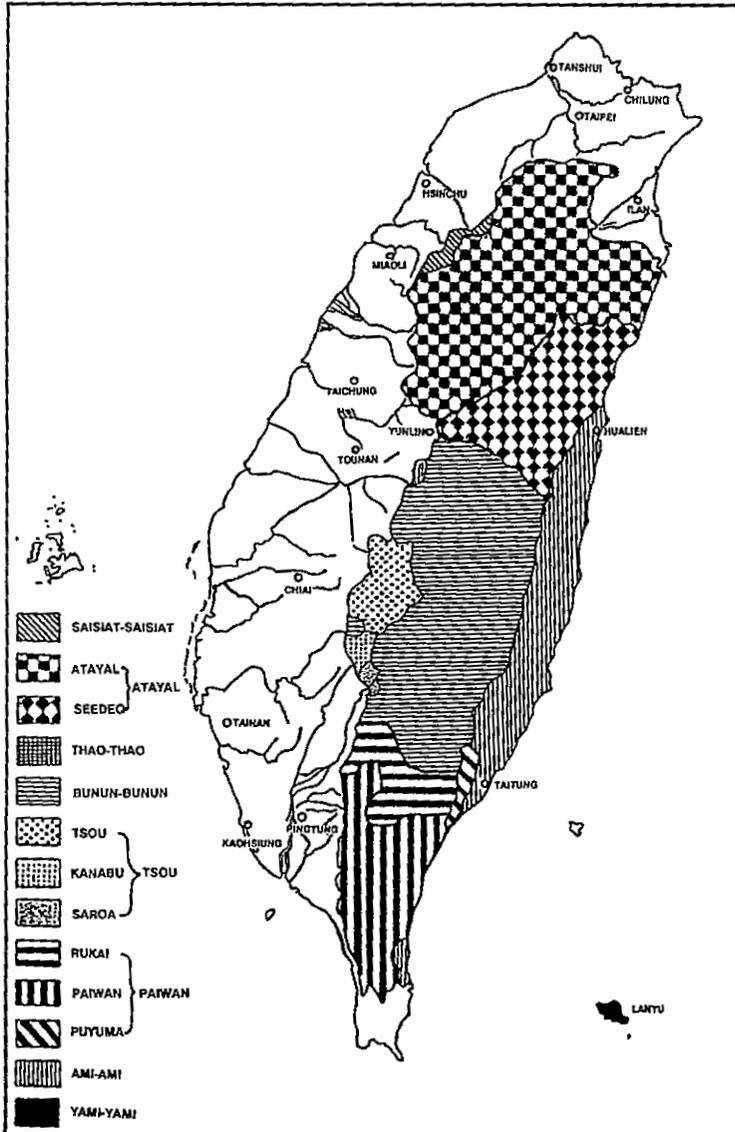
As much as 99 per cent of the emigrating aborigines were in labouring trades. Among those trades, according to unofficial estimates, 30,000 out of 100,000 female aborigines aged 13–34 were involved in various forms of prostitution. At the same time, young aborigine men constituted 80 per cent of the crew on ocean–going fishing boats. This is one of the most hazardous occupations in Taiwan. Every year an average of 250 people are killed in accidents and another 250 are arrested and jailed by foreign governments for illegal fishing. In each case more than 200 are aborigines. In 1984, a big coal mining disaster killed 72 miners – 38 were aborigines. Among the 800 miners in the same pit, more than 500 were from the mountains. The above figures are telling. However, they do not reflect some of the most degrading conditions that the dislocated aborigine faces. There are hundreds who live on the ‘garbage hills’ in the suburbs, and have to pay ‘protection fees’ to local bullies for securing the ‘right’ to recycle the garbage.⁶

Crowding out the aborigines

The exodus to the cities is attributed to the accelerating bankruptcy of the natural economy of the mountain areas. How did this happen in Taiwan, where two-thirds of the island consists of mountains with rich forests and vegetation?

The fact is the mountain area was never the real home of the aborigines, historically or geographically, socially or politically.

Taiwan: The geographical distribution of aboriginal peoples.



The aborigines on the islands of Taiwan and Lanyu belong to at least ten different linguistic or cultural groups (see map). Some of them were said to have come from south western China, some were of Polynesian–Melanesian stock. According to historical evidence, they had lived on the island for over 2,000 years. About 300 years ago, the Han people, living in the south eastern coastal provinces of the Chinese mainland initiated waves of migration to the western plains of the island. Gradually, the natural hunter/gatherer economy of the aborigines was replaced by the Han immigrants' wet-rice cultivation. Those aborigines who had not or would not be assimilated were driven deeper and deeper into the forests of the Central Mountains. In 1896, when the island was ceded by the Ch'ing government to the Japanese, almost all the as yet recognisable aborigines had been dubbed 'people of the mountains'. In 1931, after the aborigines' bitter armed resistance against Japanese atrocities, the Japanese colonial authority systematically destroyed all their villages. They were forced to resettle in new locations under constant police surveillance, strict isolation and movement control, as well as relentless 'Japanisation'.

In 1945, after the Second World War, the Japanese handed Taiwan back to the Chinese and the island fell under the control of the Kuomintang nationalist government. The aborigines who made their living in the mountains were under a control as strict as, if not worse, than that during the Japanese occupation. What had changed was only the rhetoric of suppression. The control of the mountain populations' movements was cleverly disguised as a move to establish the huge area of the Central Mountains into a "mountain peoples reserve district". This district was under the direct control of the provincial Mountain Administration Unit and occupied an area of 15,815 sq km – 44 per cent of the total island.

In actual fact, the land given to the aborigines to cultivate was only a very small fraction – only about 5.5 per cent of the island, and 12.2 per cent of the so-called reserve district. According to the 1960 provincial government statistics, among 20,176 aborigine households in the area, each household had an average 0.59 hectares to cultivate. And less than 30 per cent of this land, an average of 0.17 hectares, was irrigated. Besides, the fact that the productivity of the soil in the area is 60 per cent lower than that in the plains area, the sheer quantity of land that an aborigine could work on amounted to only half that available to the Han agriculturists in the plains.⁷

Of a substantial portion of the district supposedly reserved for the aborigines, over 87 per cent was declared a 'State-owned forest'. During the past decades, Kuomintang bureaucrats franchised Han merchants to lumber the forest, and rapid, unchecked deforestation has taken place. And yet, the aborigines are frequently jailed for 'stealing firewood' and for 'illegal occupying of public land'.

It is clear that what the "mountain peoples' reserve district" reserves, are only the privileges and monopolies of the Kuomintang and its associates. By making the mountain area a special administrative unit the area was isolated from society at large. In 40 years, the aborigines' way of life and culture has been destroyed in the name of 'equalisation and plainisation'. Their lifestyle has been equalised to that of the urban

pauper. And they have been pushed into the ghettos of the plains. Chased by Han immigrants to the mountains 400 years ago, they are once again driven away from the mountains, dispersed and scattered in the Han dominated urban regions. They have lost their homes, and worse, their communities.

Controlled flow

While there was a continuous stream of aborigines from the mountain area to the plains seeking a livelihood, the mountain area remained an area of 'controlled flow'. Even today, after the lifting of martial law, nobody can go into the reserved district without applying for a special permit from the prefecture police unit, unless he or she is a government officer of mountain affairs or a missionary who spreads beliefs in the mountain areas. Under the 'mountain control scheme', even the aborigines themselves, were forced to apply for the special permit in order to go back to their homes or get into the mountains once they had moved down to the plains. In a sense, the Kuomintang control of flow, is a less 'apartheid-like' apparatus compared with the Japanese one, for it only controls population in-flow, not out-flow. However, ironically, under the pretext of "ensuring the security in mountain areas and protecting mountain peoples' interests", the aborigines were further isolated as a 'closed population'. What is worse, the push forces from within and the pull forces from without kept draining the most valuable human resources from the aborigines' homeland.

Needless to say, the controlling of population in-flow does not necessarily have the effect of deterring economic penetration, manipulation or dominance from and by the plains-dwelling Han majority. On the contrary, it has actually facilitated all kinds of economic interference and it helped to conceal this from the public eye.

The money economy backed by administrative coercion destroyed the time-honoured exchange system. The decaying ecology made the self-rejuvenating diet scheme and food-chain collapse and forced cultivation to commercialise. The absence of transportation, warehousing and marketing infrastructure in the mountain areas resulted in the aborigines being at the mercy of the Han merchants. Thus, in a few years, the self-supporting aborigine agriculturalist was turned into a contract farmer and, in a few more years, this contract farmer was turned into a debt-laden *peon*. Governmental records showed an increasing number of cases where aborigines 'voluntarily' applied to the government agencies 'forfeiting' the land they were assigned to cultivate.

None of the other natural resources in the mountain areas were at the disposal of the aborigines. Both the above-the-ground wealth – the forests – and the under-the-ground wealth – the mines – were 'State-owned' and the government franchised these out for lumbering or mining only to Han-established economic interests. It is this dual process – governmental monopoly on the one hand and private appropriation on the other – which not only siphoned out the mountains' resources and destroyed the natural economy, but also forced the aborigines into exile.

It is clear that what happened to the aborigines in Taiwan was by no means an isolated phenomenon. Rather, it was part of an overall social transformation which swept over the whole island right since the beginning of the Cold War. The Kuomintang authoritarian regime reinforced its alliance with international capitalist interests and made its presence felt in every aspect of people's lives; society as a whole was violently divided and segmented.

In the past four decades, the Kuomintang has solicited the backing of foreign powers and their commercial interests for its own survival. It adopted a policy which pushed the island to be incorporated in the network of the US-dominated international division of labour. This policy which tried to make economic dependency a partisan asset has meant a very high social cost for the people of Taiwan.

If we say that Taiwan society as a whole experienced a 'neo-colonialistic' appropriation at an international level, to the aborigines this meant being sub-colonised to the lowest social strata via a process of 'internal colonisation'.

Out into the open

Under the Kuomintang's sophisticated information control and censorship, these facts remained unknown to the majority of the people in Taiwan. It is not until very recently that certain events, which have been brought into the open, have struck people like lightning.

On 1 May 1983, *High Mountains Are Green*, the first magazine of the aborigines and by the aborigines, was published. The front cover of this issue states: "We have to say that Taiwan High Mountain Tribes are facing a deadly crisis of genocide." Hence, a social movement of the aborigines for their own emancipation and salvation forced its way into an arena where several other struggles were in the nascent stage.

In 1984, there were two big mining disasters in which almost 200 people were killed — half of them aborigines. These two disasters not only helped heighten social consciousness on industrial safety, but also alerted people of the socio-economic predicament the aborigines were trapped in. By the end of 1984, the first aborigines' organisation formally declared its existence. The organisation was called in English 'Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines'. This organisation coined the term 'primordial inhabitants' for all the 10 existing aborigine groups. This can be called the first major action taken by the aborigines to show their self-awareness and the beginning of their struggle for survival, not only as isolated individuals but as societies and cultures.

As Eric R. Wolf says, "The ability to bestow meanings — to 'name' things, acts and ideas — is a source of power. Control of communication allows the managers of ideology to lay down the categories through which reality is to be perceived."⁸ What is more, this naming and categorisation "conversely, entails the ability to deny the existence of alternative categories, to assign them to the realm of disorder and chaos, to render them socially and symbolically invisible."⁹ This is precisely the politics of

'rectification'. Predicated upon the notion that history is a business of 'account-making'¹⁰ and 'performance',¹¹ I would argue that the people who have had the longest and most intimate relations with the island of Taiwan, i.e. the aborigines, are not without their own names and voices speaking for themselves. It is just that their voices have been overwhelmed, their names have been stolen, co-opted under layers and layers of historical accounts in alien languages.

Among the 10 existing tribes today in Taiwan, the Atayal, Bunun, Tsou, and Tau (Yami) peoples refer to themselves by these names. The names actually mean 'human being'. The Tsarisan people, which means "people of the mountains", are now called the Rukai. Panapanaya (now Puyuma) is a name originally used by their neighbours to the north, the Ami; this term means 'guests'. And Ami itself is a name used by the Panapanaya to mean 'the northern(ers)'.¹² The remaining three groups are the Thao, Saisiat, the Paiwan; it is not known what their terms of self-address mean.

In historical and present day practices, these names have been used in specific circumstances and highly confined contexts to denote non-Han cultural populations in Taiwan. They are little known to the population at large, except to a small circle of 'mountain area' administrators, missionaries and scholars who have built their careers upon them, and therefore cannot afford not to acknowledge their existence.

However, throughout history these peoples have been lumped together under different labels by different 'others' in different circumstances. Let us look at those labels used by the Han-Chinese.

Aborigines in Han-centric Chinese historical accounts were most frequently called 'Fan'. 'Fan', as a category, encompasses whatever is excluded from what is deemed to be or claimed to be 'Han'. This category has become so encompassing that in actual practice it is virtually meaningless. Thus prefixes had to be coined. Aborigines in the island were labelled 'east-fan', 'dirt-fan', 'wild-fan', 'raw-fan', 'cooked-fan', 'already-assimilated-fan', 'not-yet-assimilated fan', 'transforming-fan', 'mountain-fan', 'plains-fan'.... etc.¹³

After 1945, fifty years of Japanese colonial rule ended. The post-War reformulation of the aborigines by the Chinese under a new republican ideology was also transformed. The Han-centric administration began to label the aborigines as 'mountain tribes', 'mountain tung-pao' (brethren of the mountains), or simply 'mountain pao'.

However, given this bureaucratic context in which aborigines were labelled as ruled subjects, permutations of the ill-formulated 'mountain pao' became not only possible but, in a sense, necessary. Consequently, we have terms like 'mountain-area mountain-pao' and 'plains-area mountain-pao' appearing in provincial government bulletins, and later in academic reports. The most recent permutation actually reflects the exodus of these peoples from their long-designated habitations to the city slums. So, nowadays we hear of 'city-dwelling mountain-pao'. In addition, occupations were also used as designations. Some people venture to suggest that the most appropriate

categorisations today would be something like 'mountain-pao in the coal pits', 'mountain-pao on the high seas', 'mountain-pao hanging on the high-rise scaffold' and 'mountain-pao of the whorehouse'.¹⁴

Thus, the stage was set for the 'real natives' to speak out for themselves. On 15 February 1985, the first page of the first issue of *Primordial Inhabitant*, a bimonthly newsletter published by the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines, published an article entitled *Primordial Inhabitant: Why We Chose This Name*. The aborigines chose to use the name because it is 'pure' and it makes clear that it refers to the peoples who were the original masters of this island and because it is a newly coined term which has not yet been contaminated.

In the past three years this organisation has carried out a series of educational and social service tasks catering mainly to the dislocated urban slum aborigines. Politically, they protested the execution of Tang Yin-sun, a teenager who resisted the unbearable abuses of his Han employer and finally killed the employer's family in a fury; they demonstrated in the prostitute district of Taipei, protesting the institutionalised system of teenage prostitution – especially the buying and selling of aborigine girls for prostitution; they also managed to force the Kuomintang ministry of education to agree to scrap the Han chauvinistic myth of 'Woo-fong' from elementary school textbooks. More recently, 300 young people from the smallest aborigines group – the Yami, with a total of 3,000 people – supported by 50 non-aborigines social movement activists, launched a well publicised anti-nuclear parade in their island of Lanyu. This was aimed at stopping the dumping of nuclear wastes by the government in a yard next to their yam fields and their burial grounds.

Judging from what had been said and what has been done, the leaders of this newly born social movement are of great maturity and creativity. They are by no means aiming at any 'return' to any imagined 'primordial state' or to their pristine cultural origins. They are faced squarely with the realities of today which threaten their survival, not only of individuals, but of ten dying societies and their cultures.

Han-chauvinism yet again

Ever since the aborigines became aware of the necessity of fighting for their own survival, and stood up as the 'primordial inhabitants' of Taiwan, they have accomplished a great deal. Yet what is more important in the long run is not any particular victory they have so far managed to secure. The political space they opened up, and the various social forces with whom they have built relationships of co-struggle will prove to be of great significance to their future success. In this context they are aware of the very limited possibility of parliamentary democratic reform. They do not have any illusions about the games which the new opposition has been playing.

Eight months before the lifting of martial law, a new political party forced its way into existence, calling itself the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). This move shocked the Kuomintang and shook the island – it had defied a party that had ruled

for 40 years. The DPP is a hastily established party, whose only unifying element was the opposition to the existing political order. Forces which formed this coalition were of an extremely diverse nature: In terms of their power base, ideological persuasions, political orientation, economic interests as well as the stance taken in terms of the minorities and national problems.

Judging from the DPP's manifesto, various communiques and its actual performance in the past, it is clear that it is manned by middle class intellectuals and politicians. On the one hand, their political goal was to defend the interests of large and middle-sized business and, on the other hand, to break the Kuomintang's monopoly. This is not to say that they are opposed to monopoly as such. Were it to be shared or substituted — especially by a group of neo-power-elite which might emerge from the battle in a more liberalised general election — the opposition to the monopoly of power might cease to exist. Criticisms and accusations of the DPP soon arose — as a party whose politics were to substitute rather than transform, share rather than reform the power structure. The DPP was compared with the Kuomintang and strong similarities were pointed out — ranging from behaviour patterns, to institutional arrangements, political orientation, ruling mentality and the philosophy of a 'two-party-system' together with all the relevant and irrelevant rhetoric.

Most significantly, the aborigine issue is wholly absent from the political programmes of the DPP. The Kuomintang, even during the period in which it controlled the central government in China, had never been confronted with the problems of minorities or 'frontier nations'. At that time the control of many regions was merely nominal, especially with regard to the minority areas. After the 'northern expedition', the five-stripe flag of 'a republic of five nations' was replaced by a flag of 'red earth with white sun and blue sky'. Ever since, the notion that China is a multi-nation State has been virtually unacknowledged — neither in the Kuomintang's ideology nor in its various versions of the Constitution. The peoples of China became one single nation — the "Central Flower Nation" — a nation composed of people of varying degrees of Han-ness gradating (degradating) from the Han centre to its periphery.

The DPP shares this attitude. It makes no mention of the multi-national or multi-cultural reality of Taiwan's people.

One of the major issues among the DPP's rival cliques, concerns the future political affiliations of Taiwan — whether to push for 'independence' under *pax Americana* or to acquiesce in unification with the Chinese mainland in the future. There has also been talk of an independent 'Taiwan nation'. However, this notion of an independent Taiwan recognises as 'Taiwanese', only groups of Han immigrants from China (except of course the most recent group of Han military personnel and their families who fled recently from Taiwan together with the ruling Kuomintang). It is the offspring of Han-immigrants to Taiwan from the Ch'ing dynasty, who speak Southern Fukian (now called Taiwanese), who are to be the 'Taiwanese' *sui generis*. The

boundary between the Han and the ten non-Han aboriginal groups is clearly marked – Han-chauvinism in full-swing and in its most manifest state.

While claiming itself representative of the interests of all people, the DPP neglected all social classes except itself – the bourgeoisie. Given this position, it is understandable that it would be blind to both the development of labour movements and the growth of the aborigines' struggle in recent years.

New social movements

As a matter of fact, what has contributed greatly to make the various actions of the aborigines in the past three years possible and successful, was the extended support they managed to mobilise among the non-aborigine and non – DPP-affiliated groups of progressives: Feminists, environmentalists, anti-nuclear activists, labour organisations, liberation theologians, conservationists, writers, professors and editors. In November 1987, these groups decided to organise their own political party. They called it the Labor Party (LP). In their "Declaration on the Founding of the Labor Party", there is a full paragraph on the 'primordial inhabitant':

"The primordial inhabitants were first deprived of their arable land by the Han immigrants, then deceived of their fruits of labour through various forms of exchange of unequal values. Since the 1960s, their society has further disintegrated. Their traditional societies and cultures of the mountain regions are being destroyed. And they have been transformed to man the most backward and rock-bottom segments in Taiwan's capitalist development. Furthermore, the very existence of their race is in danger. On the one hand, there is no way to eke out a living in a bankrupt mountain economy, on the other hand, it is difficult to find a decent job outside of their mountains. The thousands of young aborigine girls working as prostitutes is evidence of their unbearable suffering. The Labour Party is of the opinion that the suffering of the primordial inhabitants is a burden on the Han people's conscience. It is the inescapable responsibility of Taiwan's Han people to assist the primordial inhabitants in their rejuvenation and independent development."

On 6 December 1987, the Labor Party held its first congress and passed its manifesto. It was divided into 12 sections: Politics, mainland policies, economics, education, social rights, culture, environment, women's rights, primordial inhabitants, labour, mid/small-size business, and agriculture and fishing. On the primordial inhabitants, they elaborated further on what had been said in the declaration – concrete propositions to recover primordial inhabitants' land rights, establish autonomous districts, and allow them to retain aborigine status outside the mountain regions.

A radical democratic strategy

While the party was obviously trying to rally the combined forces of various social movements for the advancement of all working peoples' rights and interest, it gave the working class centre stage, a privileged nodal position. This approach is not without its problems. It could prove counterproductive in terms of the opening up of maximum political space in which to rally all the possible social forces. The fear is that the progressives, while successfully avoiding the pitfalls of bourgeois democratic opportunism and statism, may very well find themselves trapped instead in 'classism' and working class essentialism. This would no doubt hamper the formation of a united front of various new social movements.¹⁵

The independent development of multiple social movements in Taiwan is proof that various important issues are at stake. As a result of the highly dispersed and fluid nature of these movements, their coalition under a Left umbrella became not only possible, but also necessary. However, a Left logo or stamp cannot be printed on such a coalition. These multiple struggles, whose interests converge at so many points, must be woven together. And one would suggest that the aborigines form the warp of this fabric. No sincere social movement in Taiwan can remain untouched by the aborigine issue.

The Yami people's homeland, Lanyu, was used as nuclear waste dump and no action whatsoever was taken by the authorities even to resettle or compensate the aborigines there. Is this not the concern of a left-oriented anti-nuclear movement as much as it is of the Yami?

Thousands of teenage aborigine girls are being either sold or pawned to brothels. Their plight is as significant to the aborigines as it is to the left-oriented feminist movement.

Is it possible to push for conservation without addressing the issue of the aborigines' struggle for survival space and their basic land rights?

Traditional fishermen in Taiwan are now at the mercy of large capitalist fishing enterprises. As a consequence, a majority of fishermen have become fishery workers with abysmal incomes and working conditions. Today, the aborigines constitute the majority of these fisherman-serfs. Any social movement which aims to help the fisherman cannot but go into the reasons for the number of aborigines being so disproportionately high in this unhappy trade.

The Kuomintang has controlled or manipulated peasant associations and sacrificed their interests to those of the commercial capitalists. A social movement committed to defend the peasants against exploitation and oppression must recognise the fact that such control and exploitation has been at its worst in the mountain areas.

Like in fishing, the aborigines are concentrated disproportionately in trades like coal mining, ship dismantling and high rise construction work. These trades are hazardous, offer the least job security, and are the least unionised. Can the labour movement take off without using these trades as major battlegrounds?

All this is not to suggest that the aborigines be made a nodal point of Taiwan's various social movements. What one would hope for is a radical democratic perspective. It is in the context of a variety of social movements that the aborigines can find their proper place. And more important, it is largely in relation to the aborigines and their suffering that all the non-aborigine progressives can define and realise their cause. To all, Han progressives or Leftists (or whatever titles they may identify with) — of which I am one — I must say: Without the emancipation of the 300,000 aborigines, the emancipation of Taiwan is impossible.

Notes

1. High Mountains Are Green (the first magazine of the Taiwan Aborigines, only available in Chinese), 1983.
2. Jen-ying Wang, Population Change of Formosa Aborigines, Institute of Ethnology, Academic Sinica. Monograph No.11 (only available in Chinese, with abstract in English), 1967.
3. Sun Te-hsiung, "Population in Taiwan's Mountain Areas," in Taiwan's Mountain Economy, Taiwan Study Monographs No. 81, Bank of Taiwan (only available in Chinese), 1966.
4. Lee Yi-yuan, "Mountain Tribes Adjustment to Modernisation in the Cities," in Taiwan Aborigines Societies and Cultures, Lien-jin Publish Co. (only available in Chinese), 1982.
5. Hwang Yin-kwei, "Mountain Tribes' Economic Changes After Restoration," in Collection of Papers on the Studies of Taiwan Aborigines Societies and Culture (only available in Chinese), 1986.
6. Primordial Inhabitants: Battle Cry of the Oppressed, Published by 'Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines' (only available in Chinese), 1987.
7. Chiu Ya-fei, "On Taiwan's Minority Problems," in Taiwan and the World Monthly, No. 27, (only available in Chinese), Dec. '85 – Jan. '86, p.50.
8. Eric R. Wolf, Europe and the People Without History, University of California, 1988, p.388.
9. *ibid.*, p. 388.
10. Bernard S. Cohn, unpublished paper presented in Marshall Sahlins U. of Chicago seminar History and Anthropology, 1984.
11. Greg Dening, "Transformations that Present the Past: A Poetic for History," unpublished paper presented in Marshall Sahlins U. of Chicago seminar "History and Anthropology," 1984.
12. To be noted, all the terms used by the aborigines on the island, whether as self-address or reference to neighbours, are terms basically asserting the subject in reference to their human existence. This is quite different from the Han-centered formulations which make reference to others in terms of animals or ghosts.
13. Chiu Yen-Liang, "Some Observations on Social Discourse Regarding Taiwan's Primordial Inhabitant." Paper presented at the First International Symposium on Taiwan Studies, University of Chicago, 1985.
14. *ibid.*
15. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in Journal of Communication Inquiry, Summer 1986, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp.5-27.

9

Parameters of ethnocide and ethnic consciousness: The Hmong

Nicholas Tapp

“Anthropology....is the outcome of a historical process which has made the larger part of mankind subservient to the other.” — Levi Strauss.¹

The Hmong people of the mountains of northern Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Burma and China, are traditionally organised in an egalitarian society based on the shifting cultivation of dry rice, maize and poppy. There is no political organisation above the level of the village, no hereditary office, and little division of labour. The Hmong kinship system, which organises ritual affairs and productive activities, is based on a principle of patrilineal descent through ritually significant lineages and sublineages grouped into a number of exogamous clans which closely parallel those of the Chinese surname groups. No written genealogies of descent are kept; traditionally there has been no writing system. There is little accumulation, owing to the scarcity of heritable property in a society based on shifting cultivation. The only hereditary occupation is that of the shaman, which no clan, lineage or other group monopolises. Any male or female adult can and may become a shaman, provided that at least one recent patrilineal ancestor has been one. Individuals specialise as blacksmiths, musicians or wedding go-betweens, but these specialisations remain on an individual basis and do not release the specialist from the demands of agricultural labour. Differences of wealth and status may exist between clansmen within a single village, but these remain clearly tied to the amount of labour available to particular households which form the units of production and determine the amount of land it is possible to cultivate, and such differences are therefore rarely transmitted to succeeding generations.

Cooper² has analysed the strong sexual inequality in Hmong society in terms of the introduction of the opium poppy into the economy as a cash crop during the last century. This is a plausible analysis, but concrete historical evidence to confirm it is

lacking. Cooper further draws attention to emergent class distinctions among the Hmong of northern Thailand as shifting cultivation is replaced, under government pressure and growing scarcity of fertile land, by more permanent settlements. However, particular strategies have evolved to maintain shifting cultivation in the face of such pressures, such as the relocation of opium fields to distances further away from villages and the mechanisation of transport, and certainly emergent class differences have not yet become institutionalised. Polygyny is practiced only to a limited extent, since most Hmong cannot afford the expensive bridewealth demanded at weddings.

What, I would argue, has occurred to a far more important extent, is that relations have evolved between different ethnic groups since the introduction of the opium poppy and its historic institutionalisation by State agencies (the Royal Thai Opium Monopoly in Thailand, the French Opium Monopoly in Indochina), which have taken on some of the characteristics of class exploitation. As relative newcomers to the north Thai hills, the Hmong with other groups have been forced to occupy somewhat different ecological niches to those already occupied by the Karen, who used to farm terraced wet-rice fields at intermediate altitudes or practiced a rotational form of swiddening.

The forest economy of the Karen sustained important links with the wet-rice Thai economy of the plains and valleys, particularly through the Bombay-Burma and Borneo companies in Burma (where the largest concentrations of Karen live) and in northern Thailand. What has happened with the occupation of the steeper and higher slopes by incoming groups such as the Hmong, for the cultivation of maize, dry rice and opium poppy through a pioneer system of swiddening primary forest, has been a protracted process of alienation and displacement. This is not, however, clearly attributable solely to the Hmong as an ethnic group, but rather to the nature of commodity enterprises in general. As the hill population has swelled and available fertile land acreages have diminished,³ particularly as a result of the growing influx of landless lowland north Thai peasant immigrants into the hill areas,⁴ the need for intensified production has been largely met through the development of relations of dependency and domination between the Hmong and Karen.

Landless Karen migrants, seasonal and permanent, many of whom are opium addicts, have turned to other forms of employment such as road construction or a type of wage labour on Hmong swiddens during peak labour demand times of the year. At the same time, Hmong farmers have invested in Karen lands, in some cases employing Karen to continue working them. The migrant workers, mostly male, sleep in Hmong houses for the duration of their work and are fed there, usually at a separate table from where the Hmong household eats, or on a mat spread on the floor, and are often paid in opium. Four or five such labourers may be attached to a rich Hmong household at any one time, and some of these personal relations of patronage become permanent seasonal ones.

Here a nascent class structure is clearly in the process of formation, which has articulated with pre-existing ethnic stratifications where those stratifications

themselves represented differential divisions of labour. These relations can also be generalised for other areas of northern Thailand where they involve members of other ethnic groups. In turn, these relations are cemented by the wider relations of credit and indebtedness in which many opium-producing Hmong households find themselves with brokers who tend generally to be of Thai or Chinese ethnic origins. Brokers extend credit in the growing season at high interest rates which is secured after the harvest in the form of opium. It is these relations which extend to a wider international arena of credit-based commercial syndicates serving the world market in heroin. The entire structure, certainly as regards Burma and northern Thailand and probably in areas of the 'Golden Crescent' as well, is predicated on a division of labour which has taken an essentially ethnic form, and which we might therefore formally term caste-like. Although Cooper has argued cogently that female labour must be seen as fundamental in this process,⁵ I believe that this issue should be subordinated to the question of relations between larger groups.

'Development' efforts

There have been many paramilitary and internationally assisted 'development and welfare' programmes launched in northern Thailand since the official banning of the production, consumption and distribution of opium in 1959, aimed at eradicating opium production, preserving the watersheds, and 'integrating' the ethnic minorities. Yet, as an ethnic minority group, usually lacking the rights of tenure or ownership of the lands they occupy and cultivate, and often without basic citizenship rights, the Hmong remain at an extremely disadvantaged position with regard to the dominant Thai majority. Educational levels remain low, medical facilities are virtually non-existent, and there are few opportunities for those openly defined as Hmong for service in the important government and bureaucratic sectors, for example as teachers or agricultural extension officers. This discrimination is ideologically buttressed by a variety of ethnic stereotypes of the Hmong which are widespread in Thai society. After the first five years of developmental efforts, a serious insurrection of the Hmong against the Thai government erupted in four northern provinces in 1967 which has continued until recently. Such was the concrete effect of development programmes.

Recently, the strength of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the countryside, which had supported the struggle of the Hmong for autonomy, has been eliminated. Following this, the position of the Hmong and other ethnic minorities in northern Thailand has become even more vulnerable than when they were in the invidious position of being illicit opium producers; their activities were tolerated then by a 'sympathetic' policy recommended towards the enforcement of the opium laws. Serious attempts to eradicate the production of opium have for the first time taken place in Thailand, coupled with efforts to destroy the economic basis of the hill people's economic systems by enforced relocations and the burning of minority villages. Such policies are even legitimated by referring to Buddhist ideology, the

identification of the balance of nature believed to be disturbed by shifting cultivation as the *siladhamma*, the moral base of the Theravada Buddhist code of conduct. Ecologists and Buddhists make strange bedfellows with counter-insurgency experts and anti-narcotics agents, yet it is this coalition which is now being mobilised to eradicate the culture of the Hmong.

One of the most important counter-forces to integration of this kind has been, ironically, the tourist industry, Thailand's third largest source of foreign currency. Through guided tours to opium producing villages in northern Thailand, showing of minority song-and-dance routines, and sales of minority handicrafts from department stores in Bangkok to those in New York, some consciousness has been created among the Thai elite and in the international community of the worth and value of the cultural heritage of the Hmong; also, the tourist industry has provided economic opportunities to individual minority entrepreneurs. So it is closest to the provincial centres of development that traditional Hmong costume tends to be preserved. This accentuation of ethnic identity, albeit for particular ends, provides a resistance to attempts at enforced relocation and integration. It is a strange paradox that tourists can be taken on 'tribal treks' to see 'traditional' Hmong villages surrounded by beautiful white, red and purple poppy fields, cultivated by 'quaint' mountain people who seem an eternity away from the progress and development of modern Thailand, while at the same time their production of opium integrates their social and economic system ever more securely into a world economic system and subsumes their own culture. This process of simultaneous centralisation and marginalisation (or in Frank's terms the 'development of underdevelopment'), owes much to the fixing of colonial boundaries in the region in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the commercialisation of the opium industry.

With the formation of Thailand's modern borders under the impact of the French colonisation of Indochina and the British colonisation of Malaya and Burma, the Hmong, together with other ethnic minorities, found not only that their community had become a transnational one, but also that the areas they inhabited and the commodities they produced were at the most peripheral, and therefore contested arenas of State formation. This resulted in their increasing strategic value in the struggle of the Viet Minh and Pathet Lao, and their coercion as porters, intelligence-gatherers and guerilla fighters along the China-Vietnam, Lao-Thailand and Lao-Vietnam borders. Yet it would be a mistake to depict the Hmong as merely passive victims in this process. Instead they have become active accomplices in the preservation and effective reinforcement of certain aspects of their traditional culture. If Hmong ethnicity has been formed through this twin process of integration into a world political and economic system and simultaneous marginalisation into the most ambiguous territorial and economic domains, it is this reconstituted ethnicity itself which poses problems for the increasing integration of the Thai polity into wider regional associations.

Official stereotyping

Developmental discourse provides a basis for further concrete discrimination. Thai historical and documentary sources often declare that northern Thailand (actually only under central administrative control and incorporated as part of modern Thailand during the present century), is inhabited by a number of 'nomadic' immigrants from the neighbouring countries of Laos and Burma. While it is in fact true of the Hmong that they have probably only inhabited the area for some 130 years, this is not true of the largest ethnic minority in the hill areas, the Karen, who have been historically settled in the area for several centuries, nor of other minority groups who probably preceded the Hmong.⁶ Yet Hmong, Karen, and other ethnic minority groups are generally grouped together as recent immigrants in official ideological discourses as well as in popular speech, which thereby legitimates attempts to assimilate them into the Thai State. This in turn suits official policies of domination and oppression towards the members of ethnic minority groups. In casual conversation, the average Thai villager or townsman will often depict the Hmong as dangerous, subversive, primitive and unclean. This is expressed in the continued use of the derogatory term 'Meo' for the Hmong, which is strongly resented by them. However, the term receives official sanction, and requests to change it have been met by excuses about the difficulties and expenses involved in altering public records. Such ethnic stereotypes are reinforced by inaccurate governmental and developmental reports which characterise the Hmong as opium producers, communists, deforesters and destroyers of the natural environment. In fact, all these characterisations represent less than partial truths, and in some cases disguise the far more serious effects of official and international organisations on, for example, the production of opium, soil erosion and deforestation.⁷

The Hmong are no kinder to the Thai people in their own stereotyping of them. To most Hmong, the Thai people are depicted as devious, untrustworthy, corrupt and potential thieves; stealing is commonly associated by the Hmong with the crowded anonymity of urban life. Yet, because the Hmong are in a severely disadvantaged position as an ethnic minority, it is inevitably the Thai ethnic stereotypes of the Hmong which carry the enormous force and power associated with dominant ideologies and legitimate extortion, exploitation, and attempts to undermine the bases of Hmong economic and cultural life by preventing shifting cultivation and introducing Buddhist missionary programmes.

It is rightly the chauvinism of majorities which should concern us, but this need not blind us to the fact that minorities may be chauvinistic too. The problem then is two-fold, since the two chauvinisms are clearly inter-related. This inter-relationship is itself bound up with aspects of State-minority relationships which take place in a wider arena, beyond the Thai context. Particularly for the Hmong, whose culture shows strong evidence of Chinese influence and who still tend to maintain closer economic relations with local Chinese in northern Thailand than with Thai traders, that arena is

the traditional Chinese State in which many of their grand or great-grandparents were born.

The conceptual world of the Hmong in northern Thailand still remains largely a Chinese one, in which Thai officials are identified with Chinese officials and feared, envied or despised accordingly. The role of the Chinese official in judgement and punishment, and the important association of the notion of the State with the notion of the power of writing systems which are peculiarly apposite to the classical Chinese State, in which the Hmong formed part of an exploited minority people, still figure prominently in Hmong ideas and beliefs. This is reflected in myths of origin and ritual practice, modes of address and etiquette, in common daily idioms, in tales and legends which are told in an informal and everyday context to children, and in beliefs about the supernatural.

At the upper taxonomic levels in which ethnicity is defined, to be 'Hmong' is defined in terms of not being *Suav*, or *Mab-Suav*, which itself means 'others' in a general sense, or 'Chinese' in the local context. There are numerous Hmong stories about the wickedness and deception of the *Suav*, who are cited as a final cause for the loss of territory, power and writing by the Hmong. Thus to be Hmong means to be deprived of a 'territory' (*tebchaws*) of one's own, of a writing system (*niam ntawv*) of one's own, and of a centralised figure of political authority (a King, *Vaj*, or Emperor, *Huab Tais*) of one's own. In all these cases the particular deprivation is projected backwards or sometimes in messianic formulations forwards, into a mythical time dimension in which the Hmong did or will possess all these things. Most importantly, perhaps, is the strong sense of awareness of deprivation which these formulations of ethnicity demonstrate, which in turn directs attention to the lengthy and complex historical processes of State formation and 'culture contact' in which the ethnic identity of the Hmong as a minority has been forged.⁸

History

If we now turn back to the ethnonym attached to the Hmong, but which they never use to refer to themselves, we find that the Thai term 'Meo', itself derived from the Chinese 'Miao', has the most important connotations of rebellion and barbarism. Widely applied at different times to different groups, the earliest usage of it recorded in Chinese annals was to denote a rebellious people conquered by the legendary Emperor Shun to whom is popularly attributed the founding of the Chinese State.⁹ Applying Lehman's¹⁰ useful distinction here between genetic-linguistic groups and the ethnic labels which may be attached to them at different times, one can appreciate the remarkable consistency with which this term is applied in Chinese records and throughout history for some two-and-a-half thousand years to refer to people who were rebellious and opposed to the State. Innumerable records of legendary and historical 'Miao' uprisings and rebellions bear witness to the frequency with which this association was made. Today in China the term 'Miao', supposedly divested of its

derogatory overtones, is in official usage meant to describe a number of different groups, including the Hmong, who, however, are clearly culturally and linguistically related. What this tells us is that from the earliest times recorded, the term 'Miao' was used to describe people whose ethnicity was intrinsically opposed to the order of the State. Certainly in northern Thailand today the term conveys something of the same sense. Of more theoretical interest here, however, is the long historical process of displacement and alienation from resource bases which underlay the many Miao rebellions associated as they were with campaigns of land settlement and suppression. This brings us back to the nature of the ethnic identification of the Hmong as people in opposition to the process of State formation. This process itself has created smaller populations of discriminated against 'minority' peoples; their situation aggravated by the States' integration into a world economic system. This, then, is the Hmong basis in 'ethno-history' as a minority group with a particular sense of their own ethnicity.

In order to look at the nature of Hmong ethnicity as consciousness therefore, it is necessary to undertake investigations into their progressive alienation, over the centuries, from the centres of power and vital resources, and the manner in which this history becomes, ideologically, the present for them in the form of myth, song and legend. It is necessary to observe certain recurrent features which characterise both the oral history of the Hmong and the written documentary sources over which they had no control such as their persecution by the State, their loss of vital resources of water and land through trickery and deception, the triumph of material necessity over the ability to write, and the continual migration from an original homeland. It is in these remembered historical processes that ethnic identity has been formed, which today expresses itself through a variety of cultural concomitants, articulated through an ideological interpellation with the material basis of their social existence. Ethnic autonomy, while aspired to by many, is in fact possessed by no one; it remains in the realms of what Bloch¹¹ called the '*noch-nicht*', the 'not-yet', or even the 'might-have-been'.

Notes

1. C. Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology 2, Penguin Books, 1973.
2. R. Cooper, Resource Scarcity and the Hmong Response: Patterns of Settlement and Economy in Transition, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 1984.
3. W. Geddes, Migrants of the Mountains: The Cultural Ecology of the Blue Miao (Hmong Njua) of Thailand, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976.
4. A. Turton, North Thai Peasant Society: A Case Study of Rural and Political Structures at the Village Level and their Twentieth Century Transformations, Unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1976.
5. R. Cooper, *op.cit.*
6. C. Keyes, The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia, MacMillan, New York, 1979.
7. N. Tapp, Categories of Change and Continuity among the White Hmong (Hmoob Dawb) of Northern Thailand, Unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1985.

8. Leo Von Gesau Alting, "Dialectics of Akhazan: The Interiorisations of a Perennial Minority Group," Highlanders of Thailand, (eds.) J. McKinnon and W. Bhrukrasri, Oxford University Press, 1983.
9. Ruey Yih-Fu, "The Miao: Their Origins and Southwards Migrations," Proceedings of the International Association of Historians of Asia, Taipei, 1962.
10. F. Lehman, "Who are the Karen, and If So, Why? Karen Ethnohistory and a Formal Theory of Ethnicity," Ethnic Adaptation and Identity, (ed.) C. Keyes, Philadelphia, 1979.
11. E. Bloch, Geist de Utopie, Munich and Leipzig, 1918.

10

Hindu–Muslim relations in contemporary India

Asghar Ali Engineer

The secular dream

It was thought that with the partition of India, the Hindu–Muslim problem would be over. Passions, aroused during the campaign for Pakistan, would cool down once the demand was conceded and this cooling down would bring about greater amity between the two communities in both parts of the Indian sub–continent. It was also argued by Jayaprakash Narayan and others, that it was like two brothers fighting for separation; separation based on just distribution of assets brings about a feeling of amity between them. If the demand for Pakistan were accepted, the argument implied, the fight between Hindus and Muslims the two brothers, would come to an end. They would live happily thereafter.

It was also thought by Jawaharlal Nehru and others, that after the partition, a greater degree of industrialisation and the spread of scientific education would result in the creation of a scientific outlook and that the consolidation of secularism would lead to improved relations between Hindus and Muslims. Also implied in this argument was that the process of development would engage our energies in positive tasks and there would be hardly any time to fight among ourselves. Moreover, democratic processes would peacefully resolve conflict, if any.

This vision was enshrined in the Constitution as it declared India to be a secular country; it enfranchised all those above 21 years of age irrespective of caste, creed and sex; and it guaranteed and protected the rights of religious, linguistic and cultural minorities by due process of law. These were, to say the least, no mean achievements, and Nehru and others had every right to be satisfied and optimistic about the future.

However, there is a world of difference between the ideal and the real, vision and life, and expectation and realisation. Neither is an ideal realised nor can a reality ever

be idealised. The socio-economic and socio-political processes are so complex that they can hardly ever be compressed within any framework, however elaborate and comprehensive. This is not to argue against developing any framework, but only to point out its limitations. Though engineers carve out a road for vehicles to run along smoothly, the undulating topography around it cannot be overlooked. A framework is excellent for academic exercises, but the undulating topography of complex social forces cannot be ignored.

Soon new forces were unleashed in independent India, which were too complex to be easily analysed and too powerful to be easily defied. Economic development too did not turn out to be a straight-line course as expected; its topography proved to be quite undulating. The process of development, it is important to note, began to accentuate differentiation development rather than ensure homogenisation. The expectation that the feeling of nationalism would grow stronger and stronger proved to be short-lived. Except in times of crises like the Indo-Pakistan and Sino-Indian war, when the people showed an exemplary sense of unity, it would be hard to find evidence of a growing sense of pride in nationhood, unless one equates majority chauvinism as nationalism. This is not to say the situation is beyond repair and that nationalism has lost the battle. Far from it. Despite strengthening of fissiparous, chauvinistic or fundamentalist tendencies, a strong undercurrent of nationalism persists, which gives us a ray of hope.

My thoughts might appear to be contradictory to some readers. The contradiction of thought, let it be noted, is a contradiction of an objective situation, as well as its complexities. It is precisely for this reason that truth has many facets and dimensions, many levels and aspects. The formulation depends on which aspect is being emphasised and at what level. The choice may be the psychological proclivities of the formulator or it may depend on an objective situation. Also, one formulation may be made to emphasise one aspect and another to emphasise some other.

Keeping these in view, this chapter makes an attempt to analyse some aspects of the Hindu-Muslim problem in contemporary India. The main emphasis would be on the developments which have taken place since the early eighties. I consider 1980 as a turning point in the communal situation in India. It was after 1980 that the Sikh problem also emerged on the Indian political horizon. Also it was after this year that some conversions took place in Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad assumed a highly aggressive role. Again it was around this time that Islamic fundamentalism began to assume a more assertive position. The Assam agitation also became much more aggressive after 1980. Above all it was after 1980 that Mrs. Indira Gandhi's political perception changed and she began to depend more and more on Hindu votes for her political survival. This shift in her perception brought about a decisive shift in the communal situation in India, in as much as it encouraged the Hindu fundamentalist forces. The year 1980, then, is our watershed year.

Deep divide

Before we begin to analyse the post-1980 developments, a few prefacing remarks would be in order. Any new situation is not entirely new. It invariably has organic connections with the immediate as well as remote past. As far as the Hindu-Muslim relationship is concerned, even the very remote past still continues to rankle in people's memory. The Hindus still feel, in one way or another, that they were treated unfairly by their Muslim rulers. Many powerful myths are believed as 'historical realities' and taken for granted. The *Ram Janma Bhoomi* controversy which further embittered Hindu-Muslim relations during 1986, goes to prove this, if any proof is needed.

The fact of the partition of India has not yet been psychologically fully reconciled to either. It continues to be used as a powerful emotional issue to incite the Hindus. It is on this basis that the spectre of further partition is raised among the Hindus, arguing that Muslims do not practice family planning and that they are multiplying fast and soon they will demand 'another Pakistan'. Those who develop this perception cannot be convinced by any hard demographic arguments to the contrary.

It is also to be noted that each major communal riot further embitters Hindu-Muslim relations. The balm of secularism can hardly heal the wounds inflicted by repeated communal violence. Without overdrawing the picture one can say that it is communal forces which have gained in strength of late, though communalism is still perceived to be anti-human and anti-national by an average Indian. It is certainly some solace that even the worst communalist resents being branded as one. Some even try some secular cosmetics to gain respectability. Communalism thus is generally perceived as a negative value by and large.

In terms of embitterment of Hindu-Muslim relations, the end of the sixties was no less worse than the early eighties. The then Jan Sangh (now rechristened the Bhartiya Janata Party), had raised the slogan of 'Indianising the Indian Muslims'. The implication of this slogan was that the Indian Muslims were an alien community in India, having their religio-political focus outside the country. Also the underlying assumption was that Indian Muslims were a socio-political and religio-cultural monolith, undifferentiated and unfragmented. Both these assumptions were not only oversimplifications, but totally unfounded, as borne out by many empirical studies.¹

Unfortunately, the major national dailies did not see anything wrong in such a demand and even editorially supported it, comparing it with the demand for Indianisation of services during the freedom struggle. It was, to say the least, a misconceived comparison.

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Indira Gandhi, at the end of the sixties, was attacking Hindu communalist organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, for fomenting communal riots, thereby ensuring her political survival and consolidating her position. But, for similar reasons she was subtly supporting Hindu communalist organisations at the end of the eighties, beginning with the Muradabad

riots in 1980. This full circle clearly brings out the political nature of communal violence.

Mrs. Gandhi had split the Congress in the late sixties to get rid of the senior Congress leaders who were trying to dominate her. In such a moment of crisis it was necessary for her to widen her political base and for this she had only one choice – to lean on the left for support. Morarji Desai and other Congress leaders were toeing the right-of-centre line and so she perceived that the left was the only choice she had. There were other reasons too. She had her political training under Nehru and had imbibed from him a socialistic outlook and a commitment to secularism. Also, in a poor country like India, she could clearly perceive that socialist slogans were far more helpful to widen one's political base. She not only raised the slogan '*Gharibi Hatao*' (quit poverty), but also nationalised the major banks with one stroke of her pen.

This move electrified the whole political atmosphere in the country and generated a new enthusiasm among the have-nots. The right feared that under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi, the country was moving leftward and hence it struck an alliance with Hindu communalism. The then Congress-O and the Swatantra Party (now completely wiped out), came very close to the Jan Sangh, the then strong Hindu communal party. The rightist forces thus conspired to promote communal conflict to counter Mrs. Gandhi's leftward thrust. In a country like India, with hardened communal prejudices, it is always easy to manipulate communal passions for political purposes. This is what the then rightists successfully did.

In 1969, communal riots were engineered in Ahmedabad, mainly by the Jan Sangh in collusion with the Congress-O-dominated Hitendra Desai government. The communal frenzy touched new heights and took a heavy toll both of human lives and property. The main brunt was of course borne by the Muslims. Describing the orgy of violence in Ahmedabad at the time Ghanshyam Shah says:

"The riots had spread from Ahmedabad to various parts of the State. Trains were not spared. On the 20th night (September 1969), when several Muslims were escaping from Ahmedabad, four trains were stopped and seventeen passengers killed. On 23 September, when the Government lifted the curfew for three hours, forty persons lost their lives. The orgy of violence – massacre, arson and looting continued non-stop for three days. By Tuesday (23 September) afternoon Ahmedabad was under the control of the army. More than one thousand people, a large majority of them Muslim, lost their lives.... About fifteen thousand took shelter in relief camps. Arson destroyed 3,969 dwellings and shops and 2,317 more were physically destroyed. About 6,000 families lost their belongings and shelter...."²

It was a challenge to Indira Gandhi, which she tried to meet with the help of the left. She launched a frontal attack on the communalists and held the RSS mainly responsible. It was a matter of her political survival, and her political perception was

determined by this. She thus won over the left on the one hand, and minorities and Harijans on the other. The communalist offensive gradually receded, but after taking a heavy toll in Ahmedabad, Bhivandi and Jalgaon. In the latter two towns communal holocausts occurred in 1970. More than 300 lives were lost in these two towns. Indira Gandhi won the elections in 1971 with an overwhelming majority, and for the time being succeeded in consolidating her position.

Shifting sands

All through the seventies, Mrs. Gandhi's political perception remained steadfast. According to this perception, minority and Harijan votes were crucial for her survival. It was for this reason that she came down heavily on the RSS during the emergency. Though the Jamaat-Islami members were also arrested, it was more of a counterbalancing exercise. Undoubtedly, the Jamaat is an ultra conservative and communal organisation. But, as a matter of strategy, it prefers to maintain a low-key posture. The RSS and the Jamaat came much closer to each other during their incarceration during the emergency. Perhaps, this closeness was more in the physical sense, as ideologically there never was much distance between them. The founder of the Jamaat, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, had already conceded the right to the Hindus to establish a Hindu State in India according to the principles of their *Shastras*.³

However, during the emergency, many excesses were committed, especially in the north. This alienated Muslims from the Indira Congress. They voted massively for the Janata in the 1977 elections. This shift in the Muslim vote brought about a decisive change in the perception of Mrs. Gandhi. Though the Muslims voted by and large in her favour in the 1980 parliamentary elections, she did not change her perception. She could no longer take Muslim loyalty for granted through the vicissitudes of politics. Her perception was further confirmed when the Andhra Pradesh Muslims voted in favour of the Telugu Desam Party of N.T. Rama Rao. At one time this state was one of her impregnable forts. But it collapsed like a house of cards.

According to her new perception the Muslim vote could no longer be taken for granted and hence she began to cultivate the Hindu constituency. This meant cultivating not only the upper caste Hindus, but also the rising middle castes among them. The upwardly mobile Hindu middle castes, in her new perception, could compensate for the loss of the Muslim votes. This decisive shift in her perception began to change the entire communal scenario in India. She became soft towards the RSS and other Hindu communal organisations. She no longer denounced the RSS for perpetrating communal violence since the Muradabad riot in 1980. This riot, which took a heavy toll of Muslim lives, is a sort of watershed in the history of communal violence in post-independence India.

Girilal Jain, former editor of the *Times of India*, wrote a signed article putting the responsibility for the Muradabad riot on a 'foreign hand',⁴ thereby implicating the Arab countries. There was also a decisive shift in Indira Gandhi's policy towards

Muslims. Muslims were getting more and more alienated from her in this new phase of Indian politics. *Indira Gandhi* herself never strongly contradicted the 'foreign hand' theory. She, at best, kept on obfuscating of the issue.

Thus, in the post-1980 period we have to take two other factors into account to understand the topography of communalism: Rise of the middle castes on one hand, and the spread of religious fundamentalism on the other. In fact, it was during this period that religious fundamentalism was thought to be a key factor as far as communalism was concerned. The concept of fundamentalism was in fact borrowed from the West. This term was coined by the Western press to describe the rising religious militancy in the Middle East, especially in Iran. The 'foreign hand' thus crystallised into 'religious fundamentalism', a catch-all term which has been freely used ever since. It would be necessary to throw some light on these newly emerging factors.

Caste and communal politics

First, a look at the middle castes who had 'arrived' on the political scene. They have shown not only more militancy, but have resorted to, in increasing degrees, to caste and communal politics. The process of socio-economic development in post-independence India initiated by five-year-plans, as well as through other measures, had far reaching consequences. Over a period of time, this process has succeeded in changing the entire political topography of the country. The dynamics of development unleashed forces that made many castes and communities socio-economically, and consequently, politically mobile. The process of mobility within the framework of capitalist economy bred structural inequality on the one hand, and brought about a revolution of rising aspirations on the other. It should also be noted that the very process of economic development is invariably accompanied, in an underdeveloped society, with violence. The experience of all underdeveloped societies undergoing the process of development throughout history in general and in the 20th century in particular, has shown that violence is integral to the process of development.

From our experience in the twentieth century one can formulate the following hypothesis: If economic development takes place in a capitalist framework in an underdeveloped country with multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-linguistic or a hierarchical social structure, violence is likely to erupt along religious (communal), regional, caste or linguistic lines. If, on the other hand, development occurs within the socialist framework, in such a society, violence is likely to break out on class lines. I would also like to emphasise that the above hypothesis does not preclude violence along class lines in the former case, and along caste, communal or regional lines in the latter case. But it would not be the principal form of violence; it would be a secondary form of violence.

In the light of this hypothesis, it would be seen that the process of development in countries like the Soviet Union and China violence principally erupted in the form of class, whereas in countries like India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, violence

erupts principally in communal, regional or caste form. This has been the experience of several other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America as well. One can mention Cuba, Guatemala, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, South Yemen, Ethiopia, etc., in the former category, and Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Sudan, Uganda, etc., in the latter category. The list is by no means exhaustive. Also, it should be borne in mind that violence in each of these countries has its own specificity. No hypothesis can be sustained without regard to this specificity.

In India, as development has been occurring in a capitalist framework, violence always tends to erupt in caste, communal and regional forms. One community (here reference is to a religious community) develops more than the other, some castes, similarly, usurp a much larger share of the fruits of development compared to others; one region, in the same way, far outstrips the other in economic development. This iniquitous development generates a strong sense of grievance in those castes, communities and regions left out in the race, and they become more assertive through their caste, communal or regional identity.

On the other hand, the privileged castes, communities and regions, show more aggressiveness to protect these privileges, also through identity consciousness. A situation of confrontation builds up. Thus, we see that in the process of iniquitous development, primordial identities assume greater importance. Ideological battles can thus easily assume social legitimacy through primordial identities. These identities also become powerful vehicles of political mobilisation, in view of their emotional appeal. It is precisely for this reason that the process of development has been strengthening the caste and communal forces in our country rather than weakening them, despite the greater degree of education and scientific progress.

It should also be noted in this connection that religion or region are not, *per se*, the source of violence and hatred; they yield to violence or hatred, only when integrally associated with the process of iniquitous development. It is precisely for this reason that the educated urban elite tend to be more caste and communal conscious, as they have to fight their battles of acquiring or retaining socio-economic privileges through these media. Prof. W.C. Smith, therefore, rightly points out that communalism at the level of the upper class elite results in separatism and at the level of masses, in violence.

Historically speaking, the Brahmins among the Hindus had always been dominant. Hindus are highly fragmented and caste-ridden and any pronouncement about the Hindus is meaningless unless it refers to some caste among them (however, it would be erroneous to counterpose Muslims as a monolithic community as has often been sought to be done by some scholars or journalists). For long it was the Brahmins who dominated the socio-political scene in the country. But this hegemony began to be challenged immediately after independence.

The RSS, a rabidly communal Hindu organisation, was dominated by the Brahmins of Maharashtra. One of its votaries, Nathu Ram Godse, was guilty of assassinating Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. The Marathas, a rising middle caste in Maharashtra, went on a violent spree against the Brahmins to 'avenge' the Mahatma's

murder. In fact it was a war of hegemony between the two. The Marathas were on the ascendant and the Brahmins were fighting a losing battle in the political, though not in a socio-cultural sense. It is also to be noted that in their fight against Brahmin hegemony the Marathas were not anti-Muslim, if not very friendly to them.

Many of these middle castes — the Reddys in Andhra Pradesh, the Vokkaliggas in Karnataka, the Rajputs and the Patels in Gujarat, the Marathas in Maharashtra, the Yadavas, the Rajputs and the Bhoomihars in UP, the Jats in Haryana and Punjab, etc., were peasants and cultivators. They were beneficiaries of anti-feudal legislation. The weakening or breaking-up of feudalism in India strengthens these castes gradually. The greater the degree of development the further the strengthening of the capitalist class and the weakening of feudal classes. Moreover, with the onset of the green revolution, agricultural capitalism also was gaining ascendancy, finally breaking the back of feudalism in rural areas, if not eliminating it. The entire process resulted in strengthening the middle castes in various States.

With greater prosperity in rural areas, a section of these middle castes began to migrate to urban areas which were also expanding under the impact of socio-economic development. The Patels, the Marathas, the Reddys, the Vokkaliggas, the Dravidians, the Jats and others acquired more positions in government, industry and commerce. Thus, they acquired economic clout and soon began to aspire for political power.

However, in democratic development with liberal undertones, the other processes were also on. The lower castes, tribals and minorities, who generally received fewer benefits than due to them, were also becoming more conscious of their rights as well as their franchise. The lower castes and tribals in rural areas and minorities, particularly Muslims, in urban areas, began to assert themselves. The process of democratisation in other words resulted in a higher degree of conscientisation. This dynamic of development produced, in other words, a situation of confrontation between the lower castes, tribals and minorities on the one hand, and upper caste and middle caste Hindus, on the other.

As the middle castes felt directly threatened by the 'assertiveness' of the lower castes, i.e. the Harijans and Muslims, they became more aggressive and chauvinistic in hitting back. To put it more cogently, they became more casteist and communal. However, until the mid seventies, Mrs. Gandhi had leaned heavily on the Muslims and Harijans for support and the middle castes did not count much in her electoral arithmetic. But the Janata, of which the Jan Sangh became an important constituent, uncertain of Muslim and Harijan votes, had to rely heavily on the middle castes, especially in the north. The Jan Sangh anyway had its base among the urban petty bourgeoisie, comprising some of these middle castes. Thus politically speaking, it was on the eve of the 1977 parliamentary elections that the middle castes came into their own and that meant much in terms of political support.

Mrs. Gandhi was fully aware of this development as she paid heavily in that election. Her candidates were completely routed in the north and it registered with her that Charan Singh and others, with their following among the middle castes, were more

than a match for her candidates, who relied heavily on the upper caste Hindus on the one hand, and Muslims and Harijans, on the other. Perhaps it was then that she decided to shift her political balance. However, she could not be very sure of her new support-base and hence it was necessary to do it in a way which would not mean the immediate loss of her traditional vote base.

It must be conceded that she had consummate skill in balancing and manoeuvring these forces successfully. She effected this shift without directly arousing the hostility of the Muslims and Harijans. Also, she was fully aware of the support of upper caste Hindus, especially the Brahmins, in helping her retain a firm hold on the upper caste dominated administration.

It must also be pointed out that in a vast and complex country like India, with caste and communal patterns differing from region to region and State to State, no one formula can hold. In Maharashtra for example, the Congress-I has its base among the Marathas, a dominant middle caste (of course recently this base has been partly eroded due to the split in the Congress and a section going with the Sharad Pawar Cong-S). In the neighbouring State of Gujarat, however, the Congress-I has had its base among what has been called KHAM, i.e. Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis (tribals) and Muslims. The specificity of each State thus must be taken into account.

The middle castes came to play a more important role, not only in Mrs. Gandhi's calculations, but also in the reckoning of opposition leaders belonging to the Janata Party (though of course the BJP has a rather rigid political base among the urban petty bourgeoisie of the north). These middle castes are becoming increasingly communal, as they have acquired political clout and have to compete with the Muslims, the dominant minority, especially in the north. They feel, though not always justifiably, that their political aspirations are being thwarted by the Muslims. Also, in certain areas in the north, the Muslim artisans have turned into entrepreneurs and acquired some economic clout. This is also strongly resented by these middle castes.

Muradabad, the scene of the ghastly riot in 1980 in which several hundred Muslims were killed, presents the best example of this. Muradabad is famous for its beautiful brass work for which there is considerable demand outside India as well. Most of the Muslims in Muradabad have traditionally been brass work artisans. However, after the early seventies, some of them managed to turn entrepreneur and acquired a part of the export business to the countries of the Middle East. Thus, for the first time, the monopoly of Hindu middlemen was broken, though not very effectively. These middlemen felt threatened and created a situation of communal conflict which took a violent form on 14 August 1980, which happened to be the day of *Eid-al-Fitr* (i.e. the *Ramadan Eid*). Since some of these Muslims were mainly doing business with the countries of the Middle East, the theory of a 'foreign hand' was floated by Girilal Jain. The riots in Bihar Sharif in May 1981, followed by those in Meerut in September-October 1983, were also essentially major confrontations between Muslims and the Hindu middle castes like the Yadava and the Kurmis, partly on economic and partly on political issues.⁵

The Gujarat riots which by now have a long history, are also mainly a fight between the Patels — a Hindu middle caste, and the Muslims. This became far more pronounced since the March 1985 riots in Ahmedabad. One more interesting dimension of the Gujarat riots is that they have been mainly a confrontation between anti-social elements among the Patels and Muslims. In some of the fast developing urban centres, such elements have developed powerful political linkages and this politicisation of crime has accentuated communal conflict in some cases. A large segment of these elements belong to the middle castes as far as the Hindus are concerned.

It is also interesting to note that even in the caste riots of 1981 in Ahmedabad, and in the subsequent anti-reservation agitation of 1985, the leading role was played by the Patels. The Patels are a rising and highly ambitious caste, both economically and politically; they turn aggressive against any caste or community challenging their ever ascending position. In the KHAM base of the Congress-I government led by the Chief Minister, Madhav Singh Solanki, the Patels were left out and hence they launched various types of agitations and engineered caste and communal riots to dislodge the Solanki Government. They ultimately succeeded.⁶

Similarly, the Shiv Sena, another regional and communal organisation, has its base among the Marathas. To begin with, the Sena derived its support mainly from the Bombay underworld. But it slowly recruited more and more middle class elements to win social legitimacy and to articulate its political ideology. Its regional chauvinism cannot pay much political dividends outside Bombay, as there is no threat felt to the Marathi interests and identity in the provinces of Maharashtra, and hence now its posture as a Hindu communal body. It has engineered communal riots against the Muslims in Panvel, Nasik, Aurangabad, Parbhani, etc.⁷

The Marathas also took part, like their counterparts, the Patels in Gujarat, in caste riots which rocked Marathwada in 1982. In Gujarat, the caste riots were directed against the Wankars; in Maharashtra, they were directed against mainly the Mahars. This also explains the economic and political motives of such riots. The Wankars in Gujarat, and the Mahars in Maharashtra, are the two aspirant castes which have tried to make the most of the policy of reservations. These two castes are the most educated among the other Scheduled Castes. The Patels and Marathas, the middle castes, see them as a threat to their socio-economic status.

The anti-reservation agitation in Gujarat, was given a communal turn on 18 March 1985, in Ahmedabad. It shows the effect of caste conflict on the emerging political patterns and how caste conflict can be easily turned into communal conflict.

'Fundamentalism'

The second important factor which emerged on the political horizon of India in the post-1980 period is Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism. We shall try to examine this factor in some detail as it provides the ideological moorings for communalism.

As pointed out earlier, fundamentalism is a Western concept which is more applicable to Christianity, rather than Islam or Hinduism. It also has some undesirable implications. The word 'fundamentalism' was coined by the Western media to discredit Khomeini's movement against the Shah of Iran, which was essentially anti-imperialist in its basic thrust. The Indian media borrowed this term rather uncritically and applied it loosely to all movements which are either revivalist or which laid stress on the political use of religion. Though the term is imprecise for more than one reason, we will use it as it has found general acceptance in the current political and journalistic idiom in India. Therefore, in our context, fundamentalism would not necessarily mean going to the first principles or fundamental principles of religion, but rather making political use of religion or religious traditions as generally accepted by the people, irrespective of the fact that these traditions may be late accretions.

Many Muslims went to the oil-rich Arab countries and made money. If they spent part of it on their *mohallah* mosques to win some social recognition, their actions were cited as proof of Arab money financing 'fundamentalist activities' in India. Instead of referring to it as a sign of increased religiosity, for which there are credible sociological reasons, even the media took such instances as a sign of increased fundamentalism with political implications. In fact, a similar process can be witnessed among all the religious communities in India today. In large cities and metropolises, the feeling of anonymity and a loss of any organic relationship with one's village or community causes much psychological strain. Compensation for this is sought in clinging with greater tenacity to primordial traditions and external forms of religiosity.

Here we would like to deal briefly, with those aspects of fundamentalism which are really problematic today in the political context. The increased caste tensions have accentuated divisive forces in Hindu society in contemporary India. Though Islam and Christianity are also caste-ridden, the rigidity and rigour is far less, compared with that in Hinduism. Moreover, there is no theological sanction for such hierarchy in the other two religions. Thus, they appear monoliths though they are not. When the process of development further accentuated caste divisions, the upper caste Hindus began to develop certain apprehensions *vis-a-vis* Muslims and Christians, whom they see as monolith and politically cohesive.

The critical point was reached with the conversion of a few Harijans to Islam in the Meenakshipuram district of Tamil Nadu. With these conversions in 1981, a section of the upper caste Hindus took alarm, feeling that such conversions (and there were similar instances from north India) would tilt the demographic balance permanently, in favour of Muslims (and also Christians to some extent). This political perception of the upper caste Hindus assumed more serious proportions due to the happenings in the Islamic world, which had assumed great importance after the oil revolution of the early seventies, described by the Western media as the 'rise of militant Islam' and the 'swelling tide of fundamentalism'. All this went into creating a 'siege psychology' among a section of the Hindus.

In fact, the oil-rich Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, were hardly interested in sustaining any militant movement at all. On the contrary they dreaded it most. Except for Iran and Libya, hardly any Muslim nation was interested in promoting militant Islam and that, too, by no means one directed against India. Moreover, Libya and Iran, both needed Indian support through the Non-Aligned Movement. However, in human affairs, a mythologised perception is more appealing than a realistic one. So the mythologised perception of militant Islam became the favourite nightmare of many in India, and they were further convinced of Islamic fanaticism.

Hindu communal organisations were fanning this fear systematically. The common Hindus, especially those belonging to the middle and upper castes, began to entertain the fear that militant Islam, if unchecked, would soon swallow Hinduism, which was already fragmented and caste ridden. Mrs. Gandhi, who was in need of Hindu support, shrewdly exploited these feelings and began discreetly promoting the cause of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a Hindu 'fundamentalist' organisation. A series of statements were issued by various VHP and other leaders, including some Congress-I leaders, that Arab money was involved in the Meenakshipuram conversions. In a different political climate in the country, the few unimportant conversions in Meenakshipuram would have passed unnoticed. But the VHP and similar Hindu organisations were quite conscious of the political mileage that could be had from of this incident, and hence with the help of the national press, the whole issue was blown out of proportion. A content analysis of various major English weeklies and dailies on this issue makes an interesting study.⁸

There is evidence to show that Mrs. Gandhi wanted to lean upon the political support of the upper caste Hindus,⁹ and was, very cautiously promoting the cause of Hindu unity. She virtually blessed the *Ekatmata Yatra* (Hindu Unity procession) taken out throughout the length and breadth of the country by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in 1983. She did reap political benefits in as much as she won the Delhi Metropolitan Council elections and all the seats in the Jammu region in the elections held in 1983, with the help of the RSS. In the election campaign in Jammu, she even tried to project herself as the 'saviour of the Hindus'.

Thus we see that in the post-1980 period, Hindu fundamentalism emerged on the political scene with a definite political purpose, which it has been trying to achieve ever since, with only partial success of course. Meanwhile, the RSS maintained a low-key posture and pushed the VHP to a frontal position. The VHP has been campaigning for militant Hinduism and has been instrumental in fomenting communal trouble in various parts of India, north as well as south, east as well as west. It raked up a controversy over the birth place of Lord Rama in Ayodhya, in the Faizabad district of UP. Riots took place on this question, as the VHP claimed that a mosque there was the birthplace of Rama. The VHP has drawn up a list of mosques which it claims are Hindu temples and plans to launch a campaign to 'reclaim' all these mosques. A new controversy in respect of Lord Krishna's birth place has already been created which was unfortunately given prominence by the *Times of India*.¹⁰

Personal law vs common code

It is true that the Muslims are generally at the receiving end in almost all communal riots. But that does not mean that the Muslim leadership does not strike fundamentalist postures. A section of this leadership has in fact received financial aid from countries like Saudi Arabia, which are interested in maintaining the *status quo* among the Muslims, and hence it has acquired a deep interest in opposing any meaningful change. The *Ulama* have also received money from these countries to build mosques and *madradas* in various parts of India, and these institutions have become, as far as the Muslims are concerned, powerful centres of orthodoxy which often seek political expression. The chief form of this expression is forceful opposition to any change in the Muslim Personal Law as it operates in India. It is interesting to note that some of the clauses of the Muslim Personal Law Act enacted by the British in 1937, are opposed to the provisions of the *Shari'at* and despite this it is defended as a 'divine law' by these leaders and the *Ulama*.

The Muslim leaders, with few exceptions, have always tried to exploit the religious emotions of the masses of Muslims. It would be difficult to find any instance of any Muslim political leader devoting himself or herself to the cause of the uplift of common Muslims. On the other hand, they have always been found on the frontlines whenever any religious issue, however trivial but capable of emotional exploitation, arose. One can argue that the Muslim leaders are no better than other leaders in India. Yes, very true. But it should be borne in mind that Muslims are a relatively backward minority and this puts much more responsibility on those claiming to represent them. The Muslim leadership, however regrettable it may be, has proved totally bankrupt, opportunistic and dishonest in its intentions.

To what extent it can go in exploiting the religious sentiments of Muslims is incontrovertably proved by an unparalleled agitation on the question of the Shah Bano judgement of the Supreme Court. It was an issue relating to payment of maintenance in certain cases beyond the period of *iddah* (i.e. a waiting period of three months after the divorce) under Section 125 of Indian Criminal Procedure Code. Neither was there a blanket order requiring Muslims to pay maintenance in all cases beyond the period of *iddah*, nor was there any specific injunction of the *shari'at* not to pay maintenance beyond this period under any circumstances. There have been differences among the Muslim theologians on this question and verse 241 of chapter 2 has been differently interpreted by different *Ulama*¹¹

The theologians and the Muslim leaders were not unaware of the fact that the issue at best was controversial and different interpretations were possible. But they displayed political opportunism of the worst kind and made it a major issue, projecting it as one on which the very survival of Islam was dependent on in India. They brought thousands of Muslims to the streets to pressure the Government into amending Section 125 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) or to introduce a bill in Parliament making a separate provision for Muslim divorcees in keeping with the *Shari'at*. The agitation assumed unprecedented proportions and the Government had to give in.

It is true that the national press also made it a major issue and launched a diatribe against Islam and Muslims and made the concept of a common civil code a *sine qua non* of Indian secularism. Along with the Muslim leaders, the Hindu communal leaders were also at their aggressive worst. In fact, both fed on each other's chauvinism. Religious fundamentalism in the sense of total politicisation of religion could be witnessed during this agitation. In fact it was wrongly made out to be the test of Indian secularism, from both sides of the communal divide. Only a few sane elements could view it with rationality and poise.

This issue raised an interesting debate as to what a secular State should do when a religious community demands to be governed by its own religious law. The Muslim leaders argued that the true spirit of secularism demanded, as well as the constitutional provision under Section 25 required, that their personal law not be tampered with, without their express approval. The argument from the other side was that it is a travesty of secularism to allow any community in the country to practice traditional laws which denied a section of that community, especially its women, equality before law.

It is, it must be admitted, a very delicate question. Only an authoritative body like the Supreme Court can make any final pronouncement on the subject. However, a layman can say that a constitutional provision certainly says that no law could be forced on an unwilling community. Also, secularism cannot, and should not, mean doing away with all religious practices falling within the domain of personal laws, nor should it imply acceptance of a strictly rational point of view in all matters. A truly secular and democratic society should respect and protect all cultures and religious practices including those of tribes and minorities.

However, having stated this it should also be made clear that while respecting personal laws and religious and cultural practices, no injustice should be allowed to be perpetrated against any section of the society, much less against the weaker sections. Certain reasonable restrictions on divorce, polygamy and other accompanying measures should be seen in this light. In fact, if properly interpreted, no religious law, especially in Islam, allows injustice to be perpetrated against anyone. If certain later religious traditions have incorporated some unjust practices, they must be reformed sooner than later. If, however, the initiative is not taken by the theologians or leaders of the community in a reasonable period of time, a secular State must intervene to the extent of removing those injustices against the weaker sections. *Sati*, human sacrifice, untouchability, polygamy, arbitrary divorce, dowry, etc. are unjust practices and cannot be tolerated indefinitely by any society, much less a secular society.

It is highly regrettable that in contemporary India, not only politics but even secularism, has been thoroughly communalised. Political as well as social leaders have been less than honest in interpreting secularism. It is convenience rather than commitment which determines the behaviour of our leaders. One can well realise the dangers to secularism in such a situation. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that Indian secularism is going through a highly critical period. Even otherwise secular parties are

resorting to communal and casteist politics in different degrees. What is more shocking is the thorough communalisation of the political processes today. This is borne out by the fact that parties of the non-left no longer lay much emphasis on election manifestos, but rely more on setting up candidates according to the caste or community of the electorate to ensure their victory. Such rank opportunism keeps on pushing the curve of communalism higher and higher to touch dangerous heights.

What is worse is the trend of competitive communalism among various communities. Of course it is a by-product of competitive politics. Communalism in a way can be defined as achieving secular goals through religious channels. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Western educated urban elite, who have hardly any religious convictions, have used religion for political ends. Jinnah, Savarkar, Balasaheb Deoras, Syed Shahabuddin, Banatwala, Bal Thackeray, and others, including the leaders of Bhartiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, fit into this category. They shrewdly manipulate the religious feelings of their respective co-religionists to achieve their secular goals, both economic as well as political. This is much easier in a backward multi-religious society which is going through the travails of slow development.

A democratic set-up with universal franchise in a relatively backward country like India, throws up its own dilemmas during the process of development. Democratic freedom and universal franchise are necessary to guarantee human freedom and dignity. No modern society can be worth its name without guaranteeing these rights. However, there is no way to foreclose possibilities of misuse of these freedoms. Freedom to practice one's religion is an instance in point. Political interests in every religious community, however, stretch this freedom to a point that it becomes a nuisance to society and endangers communal peace. An obvious example is that of the much misused practice of taking out religious processions.

It would be a misnomer to call these processions religious processions any longer; they are occasions for parading one's communal strength. One even finds several anti-social elements armed to the teeth or drunk in some instances. These processions have been occasions for major communal flare-ups in Ahmedabad, Delhi, Hyderabad, Baroda, Nasik, Malegaon, Panvel and several other places.

The situation is difficult but certainly not hopeless because common people are not communal. They are religious and even need external manifestations of their religiosity. Such manifestation provides them with 'belief satisfaction' and also a short escape from their dreary, sloggish life. They want their religious manifestations not to be interfered with, angry only when they are made to feel that it is.

Weeding out communalism

This brings us to the last section of this chapter. It is necessary to tackle this problem on an educational level, both formal and non-formal. As far as our formal school and college level education is concerned, there are severe limitations. Even after nearly

four decades of independence, we have not been able to build up an objective, liberal and tolerant education system. Parochialism and religious bigotry reign supreme, especially at the lower levels of the educational ladder. Even now, the tendency is to view history as made by a few rulers, discounting the role of people and to see rulers as defenders of respective faiths. Such perceptions are later exploited by the communalists and they become highly emotive instruments of exploitation. This has been going on unchecked, despite avowals of the government to the contrary. Even objectively written text books would be only one step. The other important step is making available teachers with a liberal and secular outlook. The best text books cannot produce the desired impact if the teachers have a communal or intolerant outlook, which is what happens in most cases.

As far as formal education is concerned there is another political problem. The very decision to introduce healthy, liberal textbooks is a political one. Mrs. Gandhi pre-emergency, was committed to such a concept and she introduced such text books during that period. However, when the Janata Government came to power in 1977, these text books were withdrawn and a great deal of controversy took place. The Jan Sangh was part of the Janata Government and the text books were withdrawn at its instance. Political fortunes are likely to fluctuate in the coming years and it is very difficult to say who would control the central and State governments effectively. Regional parties in the States are also not likely to take very kindly to a liberal and tolerant outlook. This is proved by what is happening in Punjab, Assam, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. After all, education is a State subject.

We should, therefore, depend on non-formal education. There are many committed social action groups in the country who can undertake such an exercise. But isolated efforts are not enough. Such groups must come together and evolve a common programme focusing on communal harmony. Moreover, such efforts are needed also at the intellectual level in the form of inter-faith dialogues. Many Christian groups are doing it in a commendable way in different parts of the country. This author also did it in co-operation with the Social Science Centre of St. Xavier's College, Bombay. A series of lectures on various religions with emphasis on liberative and harmonious aspects was organised by the Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay, in collaboration with this Centre.

This can also be made part of adult education at a mass level. Literacy with purpose should be the motto of this non-formal educational campaign at the level of the masses. It is easier to convince masses as they have no stake in communalism, unlike the urban intelligentsia. On the contrary, they stand to lose in any communal conflict. As far as the masses are concerned their cultural resources in the form of folk songs and folk theatre should also be used in such campaigns.

Moreover, posters, pamphlets, wall-writings, mimeographed papers and letters to the newspapers can also be used for such non-formal campaigns. It is only such pressure that could keep people united and put the divisive forces on the defensive.

An elitist, 'rational' approach cannot be effective in the Indian situation. The rationalists consider religion to be the main 'culprit'. The only solution they prescribe is to do away with it and cultivate a strictly 'scientific and rational' approach. Firstly, religion is an instrument, not a fundamental cause of communal conflict as is amply borne out by field studies of various riots. Secondly, India is not at a sufficiently advanced state of social development to become indifferent to religion. Thirdly, as pointed out above, our schools and colleges are far from being congenial centres of even liberal and tolerant learning, let alone those of scientific and rational learning. Fourthly, human behaviour is so complex that it cannot be governed by rationalism alone. Emotions play a very important role in our total behaviour; even rationalism is preached with great emotional involvement.

A realistic policy therefore, should not ignore the still inexhausted potential of religion and should not interpret secularism in the Western sense. So we are left with the alternatives of liberalism, tolerance and respect for other religions other than our own. As far as the rural and to some extent urban masses are concerned, not only tolerance but absolute respect for other religions does exist in fairly large measure. Many anthropological studies also clearly bear this out.¹²

It should also be clearly understood that liberalism or fanaticism are not integral to any religion, or any ideology for that matter. Much depends on the historical growth, historical praxis and contemporary socio-economic and political situation of a community. Neither is Islam always 'fanatical' nor Hinduism always 'liberal' in the absolute sense of the words.

In order to successfully combat communalistic tendencies, it is necessary to cease to think in terms of superiority of this or that religion. Each religion, in my humble opinion, provides unique insights into human as well as cosmic and meta-cosmic matters, depending on its temporal, geographical and historical origin. Each religion provides us with some value system which complements, rather than clashes with the value system of other religions.

Finally, it must be understood that casteism or communalism cannot be done away with without establishing a just and egalitarian society. Unjust, uneven, and imbalanced growth and distribution of resources is bound to create caste and communal conflict. A just, socialist set-up therefore, is a must for India to be free of communalism, at least in its political expression.

Notes

1. See Asghar Ali Engineer Myth of Mainstream, mimeographed paper, Inst. of Islamic Studies, Bombay. Also see Imtiaz Ahmed's four volume series on Indian Muslims i) Family, Kinship and Marriage Among Muslims in India, published by Ramesh Jain, 1976. ii) Caste and Social Stratification Among Muslims In India, published by Ramesh Jain, 1978. iii) Ritual and Religion Among Muslims in India, published by Ramesh Jain, 1981. iv) Modernisation and Social Change Among Muslims in India, published by Ramesh Jain, 1983.

2. Ghanshyam Shah, "The 1969 Communal Riots in Ahmedabad: A Case Study," in Asghar Ali Engineer's edition, Communal Riots in Post-Independence India, Bombay, 1984, pp 190-191.
3. Justice Munir's Report on The Court of Inquiry of Punjab Disturbances of 1953, Lahore, 1954.
4. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Case Studies of Five Major Riots from Bihar-Sharif to Pune," and "An Analytical Study of the Meerut Riot," in Asghar Ali Engineer's edition, Communal Riots in Post-Independence India, *op. cit.*
5. See the mimeographed papers on the Gujarat riots prepared by Asghar Ali Engineer and circulated by the Institute of Islamic Studies. See also Asghar Ali Engineer, Economic and Political Weekly, Volume XX No. 15, 13 April 1985, pp. 628-630, and Asghar Ali Engineer and Tanushree "Gujarat Burns Again," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXI No. 31, 2 August 1986, pp.1343-1346.
6. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Ahmedabad: From Caste To Communal Violence," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XX, No. 15, 13 April 1985, pp. 628-630.
7. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Stroking Communal Fires In Maharashtra," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXI, No. 23, 7 June 1986, pp.994-996.
8. Suraiyya Durrani, "The Image of Islam and Muslims in the Indian National Press," mimeographed monograph published by Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay, 1986.
9. Suraiyya Durrani, *op.cit.*
10. The Times of India, dated 15 September 1986.
11. Asghar Ali Engineer, (ed), "Introduction," The Shah Bano Controversy, Bombay, 1986. The Introduction deals with the theological controversy in detail.
12. Imtiaz Ahmad, *op. cit.* and also Pratap Aggarwal, Caste Religion and Power, Delhi, 1971, There are several such other studies. Also see Khwaja Hasan Nizami's Fatimi Da'awate Islam, Delhi, n.d.

11

Lanka: Nationalism, self-determination and conflict

Santasilan Kadirgamar

“When used for murder, the hammer is no doubt a weapon; when used for building a house, it is a constructive tool. Nationalism considered as the vindicator of a particular culture is morally neutral; considered as a movement against national oppression, it has a positive moral content; considered as a vehicle of aggression, it is morally indefensible.” — Horace B. Davis¹

The four decades after decolonisation have witnessed the emergence of Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms in Lanka. The Tamils have demanded the right to self-determination including secession. This has led to interminable conflict, which in turn has resulted in unprecedented massacres and destruction in this once relatively peaceful land. The situation has deteriorated into chaotic and brutal violence. None of the political parties, armed and unarmed groups, movements and fronts involved in the last six decades are without blame. Finally, the resulting political vacuum has drawn India into the fray, adding little credit to its long-standing and honourable record in its relations with its little southern neighbour.

The concepts of nation, nation-state and nationalism are complex. In a sense they defy definition. As Anthony Smith states:

“The general conditions of the persistence of nationalism today... are no longer identical with those that fostered the initial emergence of nationalism whether in eighteenth century Europe or in nineteenth century Asia, or even in early twentieth century Africa. For, although certain elements of those initial conditions have persisted in a general manner, their forms have changed; and other elements, indeed new conditions, have made themselves felt, influencing the course of nationalism and hastening its resurgence.”²

It is now 40 years since the process of decolonisation began in Asia and Africa. The landmark is of course 15 August 1947, when India became free. Even as India achieved independence after a long and remarkable nationalist struggle, a tortuous search for a redefinition of what constitutes the nation began. The national question remains an unresolved problem in the sub-continent of India. The emergence of the three nation-states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, far from resolving the question has further aggravated it. "Pakistan was a multi-national state par excellence," says Kalim Bahadur, "and Pakistani leaders' attempts to cover up this diversity under the slogan of an Islamic State was doomed to fail. The emergence of the SBP Front (Sindhi-Baluchi Pushton Front) aims at the formation of a confederation of four nationalities without a strong centre."³

What is true of South Asia is equally true of many existing States in Asia and Africa. In his discussion of nationalism outside Europe, Cobban comments:

"It would be premature to conclude that institutions of self-government cannot operate successfully in any of the multi-national countries of the East, but there is enough evidence already to prove the difficulty involved in the attempt to shape them in the mould of the nation-state as the West has conceived it. Nevertheless, nation-states they are determined to be and the strength of nationalism is such that no cage can be strong enough to confine it or rival power equal to challenge its dominance. At best it may be tamed by concessions; at worst, solutions will be found as they have already been, in massacre or flight."⁴

Smith, writing more recently, stresses the same question:

"Thirty years ago, most people, if asked whether ethnicity was important any longer or whether they could discern an ethnic revival, would surely have responded negatively.... In Asia and Africa, nationalist movements were indeed making their appearance; but they seemed to be grounded on the colonial State rather than on ethnic communities and divisions.... Today, more and more people are realising that the world is 'plural'; that is to say, that the so-called 'nation-state' is rarely a true appellation, for very few States have ethnically homogeneous populations. On the contrary: most of them are composed of two or more ethnic communities, jostling for influence and power, or living in uneasy harmony within the same borders."⁵

Communalism or nationalism?

When independence was granted to Ceylon in 1948, it was assumed that the country would constitute a one nation-state. The concept of nationhood did not pose a major problem, though the problem of minorities was on the agenda. At this time inadequate

attention was paid to the 'national question'. In colonial Ceylon the problem of minorities and their representation was perceived by both the forces of the right and the left as a problem of 'communalism'; in fact it was discussed in terms of that much discredited word. The Donoughmore Commission's⁶ often quoted words read as follows:

"In surveying the situation in Ceylon, we have come unhesitatingly to the conclusion that communal representation is, as it were, a canker in the body politic, eating deeper and deeper into the vital energies of the people, breeding self-interest, suspicion and animosity, poisoning the new growth of political consciousness and effectively preventing the development of a national or corporate spirit."⁷

Communal representation was regarded as synonymous with communalism. Ironically, it was not communal representation, abolished in 1931, that eventually led to divisive tendencies. On the contrary, it was the failure of the Soulbury Constitution⁸ of 1947, to provide adequate safeguards for the minorities that set in motion the vicious circle of suspicion, animosity, hatred and violence that the country has experienced since 1948. The only provision written into the 1947 Soulbury Constitution was in section 29 (2) under which parliament's power to make laws was restricted so that: "No such law shall: b) make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable; or c) confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions."

This in practice provided no safeguards. All the major acts of discrimination against the Tamils occurred under this Constitution. The Federal Party, from its inception in 1948, was both prophetic and right in rejecting the Soulbury Constitution as one that provided no safeguards for the Tamil-speaking people. The party called for the enactment of a federal constitution.

Thus, before decolonisation it was generally accepted that the territorial entity administratively unified by the British and named Ceylon constituted one nation. It was expected that there would be a partnership of communities leading to the evolution of a 'multi-racial' society. It was not thought fit to perceive and analyse the problem in terms of ethnicity or minority nationalities. All attempts to focus on the problem of minorities were dismissed as 'communalism'. To be a communalist was to stand in the way of nation-building, placing sectional and local loyalties, religious and linguistic, above that of the larger unit, namely, the free and independent nation-state that was to come into existence after centuries of European rule. To be a nationalist was to be patriotic and committed to the struggle for independence. The model at that time was the Indian nationalist movement, where the British were attempting to weaken the freedom struggle by the tactics of 'divide and rule'. In the context of the Hindu-Muslim tension that had arisen in India, Nehru spoke of Muslim reactionaries who had gained

prominence, helped in the process by the British, making demands that struck at the root of Indian freedom and national unity. Nehru, however, admitted that many a Congressman was a communalist under his 'national' cloak.⁹

Following the Indian example it became common in Ceylon for many Sinhalese leaders to label Tamil leaders concerned with the rights of the Tamils as communalists, while they themselves claimed to be Ceylonese nationalists. The island did not go through a mass struggle for freedom that may have unified the two major linguistic groups, though the country had partially evolved into what Furnivall had defined as a plural society. "It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its ideas and ways There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately within the same unit."¹⁰

With the grant of universal adult franchise and the consequent participation of the masses in the political process, it did not take long for Sinhalese leaders from the ruling class to reveal their true selves as Sinhala nationalists. The task of providing a programme that would have enabled the several groups to combine in the pursuit of a society that was both democratic and socialist belonged to the left. The left movement in Lanka failed in this vital task.

The national question has remained the central issue in Lanka's politics in the 1980s.¹¹ The Tamils, under the leadership of militant youth, have demanded the right to self-determination including secession. At this juncture it is worth recalling that 50 years before this demand was made, Tamil youth had championed the cause of a united Ceylon. In 1939, the Jaffna Youth Congress published a document titled *Communalism or Nationalism? A Reply to the Speech Delivered in the State Council on the Reforms Despatch by G.G. Ponnambalam Esq.*¹² It was an eloquent statement by which the Youth Congress took a clear and uncompromising stand in favour of an all-Island nationalism and a Ceylonese identity.

The Jaffna Youth Congress, founded in 1924, led the successful boycott in Jaffna of the first State Council elections within the framework of the Donoughmore Reforms. The Youth Congress demanded total independence, the abolition of communal representation and stood for a united Ceylon. In the above document the Youth Congress, under the leadership of Handy Perinbanayagam, placed before the country in general and the Tamils in particular, a nationalist alternative to the divisive forces of communalism. Ponnambalam had argued in favour of balanced representation which was popularly known as 'fifty-fifty'. In 1934, Ponnambalam defeated the outstanding Tamil statesman K. Balasingam, who had participated in the 1931 boycott and was backed by the Youth Congress. He thereafter dominated Tamil politics until the mid-fifties.

Leaders of the Youth Congress, like Perinbanayagam and Nadesan, though deeply disillusioned in later years, never gave up the ideal of a united Ceylon. At the Youth Congress sessions in 1928, the main theme was communal amity. Nadesan, who delivered the welcome address reflected on the future of the Tamils. In attempting to

meet the argument that the Sinhalese majority was likely to dominate and further their own position at the expense of the other communities under conditions of self-government, Nadesan said that after long years of being subjected to foreign rule, the chances were that the majority community, at the beginning of self-government would use power for narrow and selfish ends; but some years of experience in self-government would teach them that strength required national unity. He expressed the hope that parochialism would cease and that people would think of the 'nation' first and that self-government would provide the remedy for the ills of the country.¹³

As it turned out, powerful and influential sections among the Sinhalese elite thought of the 'nation' first, but it was the 'Sinhala nation', and plunged the country into the futile and bloody conflict that we are witnessing today. The Youth Congress was one element among several others that led to the formation of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1935. Left leaders like N.M.Perera, Philip Gunawardene, Colvin R.de Silva and Leslie Goonewardene were frequent visitors to Jaffna and had close contact with the Youth Congress. This contact with its one time leaders continued right into the sixties. When the LSSP emerged as the leading socialist and anti-imperialist movement in the country, in the forties, it drew support from the Youth Congress in the north. The roots of the LSSP were as much in the Youth Congress in the north as in the Suriyamal movement¹⁴ in the south.

At the height of the language debate in 1956, when it became fashionable for Sinhalese spokesmen to attack the Tamils as reactionary and opposed to the national struggle for independence, Pieter Keuneman on behalf of the Communist Party of Ceylon put the record straight in Parliament. He said that it was not fair to place the sins of the capitalist and communal leaders on the entire Tamil community. He recalled the role that the Jaffna Youth Congress had played at the time of the Donoughmore Reforms and denied the allegation made that the boycott took place because the new Constitution granted political power to the Sinhalese:

"On the contrary, they took up the position that this Constitution should be opposed and the elections should be boycotted because the Constitution did not go far enough in granting freedom to the whole of Ceylon...the position taken up by the Jaffna Youth Congress was completely endorsed by progressive Sinhalese opinion in the south. That was before the left parties were started and when the All-Ceylon Youth Congress was the representative body of radical and progressive opinion."

Keuneman went on to say that it was the weakness of the movement in the south at that time that was responsible to a very great extent for the breakdown of the developing national movement in the north and the sorry period in which communal leaders of the north were able to emerge to prominence.¹⁵

Tamil nationalism and the federal demand

The Sinhalese and Tamils do not constitute two separate races. Racially they belong to one stock that emerged in the sub-continent of India through the mixing of diverse peoples, beginning more than two millenniums ago. They are one people, speaking two languages. English continues to occupy a dominant position, acting as a link language for political, administrative and educational purposes. To begin with, there were two religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, later came Islam and Christianity. The passing centuries saw the evolution of two culturally interacting religio-linguistic groups.

The processes of modernisation, such as the introduction of representative institutions and the gradual evolution of responsible government leading eventually to self-government brought to the forefront divisive forces. Ponnambalam, having entered the State Council in 1934, made the demand for balanced representation (half the seats in Parliament for the Sinhalese majority, the other half for the minorities). In doing so, he was playing on the fears and aspirations of the English-educated Tamil professionals and clerical workers. His politics in the thirties and forties had little in common with the passionate Tamil nationalism of the seventies and eighties.

The first major act of discrimination against the Tamils was embodied in the Citizenship Acts of 1948.¹⁶ By depriving the Tamil plantation workers of their citizenship rights and effectively disenfranchising them, the United National Party government led by D.S.Senanayake struck a double blow. The working class movement in the country was permanently weakened (see tables on p.193). This happened at a time when the Tamils of the Northern Province, especially in Jaffna, in spite of Ponnambalam's politics, were not averse to a slow but steady process of integration within one Ceylonese nation, the administrative and economic foundations for which had been laid during British colonial rule. The Tamil bourgeoisie had a stake in the south. Sinhalese was being taught voluntarily in Jaffna's major schools as a third language, in the hope that this would help educated young people in their search for employment in the Sinhalese south. Ponnambalam and the Tamil Congress reflected these interests when they decided to take office in the UNP government in spite of the discriminatory Citizenship Acts.

The task of mobilising Tamil public opinion against the Citizenship Acts fell to the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (Federal Party) founded by S.J.V.Chelvanayagam and his followers who refused to join Ponnambalam in accepting office under D.S. Senanayake. The party made the categorical assertion that the Tamils were a distinct nation. The first National Convention held in Trincomalee in 1951, adopted the following resolution:

"Inasmuch as it is the inalienable right of every nation to enjoy full political freedom without which its spiritual, cultural and moral stature must degenerate, and inasmuch as the Tamil-speaking people in Ceylon constitute a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of

nationhood, firstly, that of a separate historical past in this Island at least as ancient and as glorious as that of the Sinhalese, secondly, by the fact of their being a linguistic entity entirely different from that of the Sinhalese, with an unsurpassed classical heritage and a modern developed language which makes Tamil fully adequate for all present day needs, and finally by reason of their territorial habitation of definite areas which constitute over one third of this Island, this first National Convention of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi demands for the Tamil-speaking nation in Ceylon their inalienable right to political autonomy and calls for a plebiscite to determine the boundaries of the linguistic States in consonance with the fundamental and unchallengeable principle of self-determination."

The resolution further stated:

"The I.T.A.K. recommends to the Tamil-speaking people the feasibility and desirability of establishing the autonomous Tamil linguistic State within the framework of a Federal Union of Ceylon, as the rational and natural culmination of centuries of close association between these two nations in this their common motherland and with a view to promoting and maintaining national goodwill and close co-operation with the Sinhalese people."¹⁷

It is noteworthy that as early as 1948 the Federal Party (FP) stressed nationhood, the right to self-determination, and the concept of a linguistic State. While asserting the right to self-determination the Party demanded a federal constitution but not secession. The expression 'Tamil-speaking peoples' was an innovation of the party by which it was sought to include within the 'Tamil-speaking nation' the Ceylon Moors who were of the Islamic faith but spoke Tamil. The reference to the "territorial habitation of definite areas" eventually gave rise to the highly controversial dispute as to which area constituted distinct Tamil territories entitled to some degree of autonomy. In making references to "centuries of close association between these two nations in this their common motherland" and in stressing "goodwill and close co-operation with the Sinhalese people," the party adopted a realistic position. It did not resort to extremist postures. On the contrary, from the very beginning the party demonstrated a willingness to compromise in accepting a certain degree of autonomy within the framework of a united Lanka, without yielding on the principle that the Tamil-speaking people constituted a nation.

Unfortunately, the Federal Party was not taken seriously in the late forties and early fifties. Neither the ruling UNP nor the left movement gave adequate attention to the demand for autonomy. Even among the Tamil people, the programme put forward by the party, in spite of its widely respected leader Chelvanayagam, was either received with ridicule or ignored. Few people understood anything about the federal demand.

Many Tamils feared that a federal State would amount to foregoing the right to employment in the Sinhalese provinces. That was what mattered most to the Tamils at that time. On the other hand, parties opposed to the Federal Party, both of the right and of the left, distorted and confused the issues by stating that a federal constitution would be economically disadvantageous to the Tamils and that it was unworkable. Effective use was made of the fact that *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi* translated into English was *Ceylon Tamil State (Kingdom) Party*; and it was held that the name itself implied eventual secession. This was contrary to both the letter and spirit of the Federal Party declaration indicated above. It was even suggested by prominent left spokesmen that the party's aim was not alignment with India, which was a fear deeply rooted in the consciousness of many Sinhalese people, but that the party would seek to give Trincomalee to the Americans. Another argument was that the working of a federal constitution called for goodwill and that, given the required goodwill, a unitary constitution would provide more advantages to the Tamils. The debate went on in this strain until 1954, when the 'Sinhala only' cry radically altered the situation.

Meanwhile Federal Party leaders like Vanniasingam and the much younger Amirthalingam¹⁸ campaigned extensively, covering every town and most villages in the Northern and Eastern Provinces in an attempt to build up a consciousness among the Tamil people that they constituted a distinct nationality. Special importance was given to the Eastern Province. Much of their time and effort was devoted to exposing the futility of Ponnambalam's tactic of co-operation, which they dismissed as a betrayal. In spite of their efforts, the party faced defeat in the 1952 elections. It won only two seats, Trincomalee and Kopy.¹⁹ Stalwarts of the party like Chelvanayagam, Naganathan and Amirthalingam tasted defeat. The parties that won were the Tamil Congress and the UNP, both in coalition at that time. The 1952 election result could be interpreted as a rejection by the Tamil people of the Federal Party's assertion that the Tamils constituted a nation with the right to self-determination.

Both the LSSP and CP opposed the federal demand as being 'communalist' and 'reactionary', though they conceded the possibility of some decentralisation. They did oppose the Citizenship Acts but did not do enough in terms of action, in organising joint struggles by Sinhalese and Tamil workers against this measure. Both, the left movement and the Tamils failed miserably on this issue. Here was an issue that amounted to an open and blatant violation of the democratic and fundamental rights of a million people, primarily workers, in the country's key plantation sector. One would have expected such an issue to have been given top priority in the agenda of both the socialist parties and the Federal Party in terms of their own respective interests. The failure and the inability of these parties, together with the Ceylon Indian Congress (subsequently split and renamed the Ceylon Workers' Congress²⁰ and the Democratic Workers' Congress),²¹ to evolve a common political programme to defend and promote the rights of the Tamil plantation workers eventually laid the way open for further discrimination and oppression.

'Sinhala only' and Sinhala nationalism

It was a matter of time before other acts of discrimination followed. The watershed was of course 1956. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike formed the MEP, a broad front which was swept to power on a mixed programme which included socialist objectives but was also openly chauvinist. The front included Philip Gunawardene, one time Marxist and leader of the LSSP, who now led a breakaway faction of that party. The LSSP and CP entered into a no-contest pact with Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the sole purpose being the defeat of the ruling UNP. In doing so they made a major contribution to the victory of the front. Bandaranaike had promised 'Sinhala only' in 24 hours. The UNP, shortly before the elections had done a political somersault, adopting 'Sinhala only' as its policy and went back on its time-honoured promise to the Tamils that Sinhalese and Tamil would both be the official languages. This was regarded as a gross betrayal by the Tamil members of Parliament of the party, all of whom walked out. The UNP lost its electoral base in the Tamil areas, which it never regained. In fact, it ceased to be a 'national' party.

The year 1956 marks the birth of militant Sinhala nationalism. But Sinhala nationalism at that time had a progressive content. In 1944, Sinhalese and Tamil leaders had agreed that English would eventually be replaced by 'swabasha', meaning Sinhala and Tamil. All political parties were committed to the restoration of the Sinhalese and Tamil languages to their rightful places in the social, economic and political life of the country. This meant replacing English and all that it stood for, in terms of power, influence, jobs and status. English had been a symbol of superiority. But it was more than a symbol. It was regarded as a powerful weapon in the hands of the privileged English-educated elite composed of Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors and Burghers. The vast majority who spoke only Sinhalese or Tamil occupied humbler positions in society.

In addition, the 1956 upsurge sought to demolish the cultural colonialism that had bred a slavish mentality among the Ceylonese elite in relation to the Western colonising powers. What Samir Amin wrote years later was perfectly applicable to the Ceylon of the fifties:

"One of the characteristics in which we can see the absence of a national construct is the fundamentally foreign nature of the culture of the local bourgeoisie. Denationalised, acculturated, these dominant classes progressively take on the look of strangers in their own country due to their daily lifestyle, modeled on that of *homo consumens universalis*. In extreme cases, a caricature of bilingualism obtains: the ruling class uses the language of the old colonial masters, while the people continue to speak the vernacular. How can we speak of nation and national culture under such conditions?"²²

Nothing like the cultural revival that had taken place in India during the freedom struggle had occurred among the anglicised Sinhalese elites. The situation was much

better among the English-educated Tamils. The leading schools in Jaffna had given pride of place to the study of Tamil literature from the nineteenth century. In Jaffna, the impact of the Gandhian movement had been felt through the Jaffna Youth Congress. The Tamil elite, even the Christians, retained their cultural roots, whereas the Sinhalese elite found themselves having little in common with Sinhala Buddhist culture. Among the Tamils there wasn't the psychological need for the kind of linguistic nationalism and the religio-cultural revivalist fervour that marked 1956 for the Sinhalese. The much-publicised '*kiributh* breakfast',²³ the donning of the national dress and high profile participation in Buddhist religious ceremonies became symbols of this new nationalism.

What was tragic was that with the 'Sinhala only' slogan, the positive and constructive dimensions of the 1956 upsurge were lost. The ruling class manipulated a genuine movement for national revival and the search for a national identity among the Sinhalese masses into a degenerate anti-Tamil chauvinism.²⁴ Sections of the English-educated Sinhala elite who have effectively retained power never had a real interest in an authentic Sinhala nationalist movement. This would have swept them from power. In addition, the 1956 upsurge, being strongly backed by the left forces, promised socialist reforms. Bandaranaike's government called itself the people's government. The 'common man' or the 'man in the street', as he was known in the Ceylon of that time, called it *ape anduva*, meaning 'our government' and expected meaningful steps to be taken towards an egalitarian society.

The contradictions within the front surfaced soon, leading to the resignation and return to the opposition by Philip Gunawardene and his party. Feuds within the party eventually led to the assassination of Bandaranaike by a Buddhist priest. The high expectations that 1956 brought to the Sinhalese people were betrayed. The 1971 insurrection in which 10,000 Sinhalese youth lost their lives was an attempt, its failures and shortcomings notwithstanding, by deprived Sinhalese youth to regain what had been promised but never given in 1956. In a sense it was also a 'Sinhala only' movement. But it was not primarily directed against the Tamils. It was directed against the Sinhala ruling class. 'Sinhala only' in 1956 coincided with growing fears among the Tamils regarding the State sponsored colonisation schemes that were taking place in the Eastern Province on a large scale and to a lesser extent in the Northern Province. The outbreak of anti-Tamil violence in the Amparai district in 1956, consequent to the communal tensions unleashed by the call for 'Sinhala only' brought these fears vividly to the consciousness of the Tamil people. The Tamils feared that they could eventually be reduced to a minority in their traditionally majority areas.

In order to counter this danger, the Federal Party came out strongly with the 'traditional homeland' principle that has led to acrimonious debate ever since. The Tamils have claimed that the Eastern Province, including the district of Trincomalee with its strategically located harbour, should constitute together with the Northern Province one single unit entitled to autonomy within the framework of a federal constitution. This has become the key issue on which every attempt at a political

solution has floundered, beginning with the Bandaranaike–Chelvanayagam Pact in 1957.²⁵ This figure prominently in the present crisis and in the Indo–Sri Lanka Agreement²⁶ of 1987.

The brutality and fanaticism with which Sinhalese and Tamil extremists have fought each other in the Eastern Province, including the merciless slaughter of innocent men, women and children, illustrates the passions that the homeland issue evokes. The tables on page 192 illustrate the stages in which what were predominantly Tamil linguistic areas were consciously and deliberately converted into areas with substantial Sinhalese habitation through State sponsored colonisation schemes.

It is unlikely that the colonisation issue by itself would have assumed the importance it did if Sinhalese had not been declared the only official language. The Tamils in general were not over-enthusiastic about land in the fifties. In fact, colonisation had begun in the 1940s without protest from the Tamils. But with 'Sinhalese only' legitimate fears were aroused. The credibility of the Ceylonese State and its Sinhalese political leadership became a major issue.

Sinhalese leaders had committed a blunder which inevitably made Ceylon a divided nation. In the tension-filled debates in Parliament in 1956, Dr. Colvin R.de Silva, in opposing 'Sinhala Only', made a comment that has proved to be prophetic: "Two languages, one nation. One language, two nations." In ignoring the 'primordialness of languages' the issue stirred up powerful emotions amongst the Tamils. To quote Benedict Anderson, "What the eye is to the lover, language is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed."²⁷

No leader either from the right or left, was thereafter able to put the country back, in terms of the official language policy, to the pre-1956 position. Events proved the Federal Party to be prophetic. The Tamils were no longer interested in learning the Sinhalese language. They instinctively turned to land, giving primary importance to preserving and protecting the homeland, the preservation of the Tamil language and the realisation of the 'imagined community' of the Tamils within this homeland.

Repression and anti-Tamil pogroms

The Federal Party was well organised and in its own way dedicated to the Tamil cause. The party's major contribution was to keep Tamil resistance to Sinhala chauvinism alive. In the process it became one of the staunch defenders of democratic and fundamental rights, within the framework of bourgeois democracy. Press freedom, free elections, adherence to judicial and democratic processes and the right to resort to tactics of peaceful *satyagraha* and opposition to the government were defended consistently. In doing these, the FP was defending rights that the mainstream left had done for decades, but ignored once in coalition with the SLFP. Party conferences were regularly held and decision-making within the party was democratic. Due importance was given to the representatives from the Eastern Province. Under the undisputed and

Demographic data relating to ethnicity

Table I. Northern and Eastern Provinces — Population by ethnic groups

Year	All races	Sinhalese	%	Tamils	%	Moors*	%
1921	567,650	12,539	2.2	460,052	81.0	89,087	15.7
1946	758,684	33,058	4.4	596,017	78.6	127,207	16.8
1953	925,060	60,692	6.6	699,297	75.6	158,555	17.1
1963	1,288,040	129,960	10.1	935,590	72.6	216,510	16.8
1971	1,592,200	174,419	11.0	1,124,660	70.6	287,132	18.0
1981	2,087,943	276,507	13.2	1,432,679	68.6	367,839	17.6

Table II. Eastern Province — Population by ethnic groups

Year	All races	Sinhalese	%	Tamils	%	Moors*	%
1921	192,821	8,744	4.5	103,251	53.5	75,992	39.4
1946	279,112	23,456	8.4	146,059	52.3	109,024	39.1
1953	354,410	46,470	13.1	167,898	47.3	135,322	38.1
1963	546,130	109,690	20.1	246,120	45.1	185,750	34.0
1971	717,571	148,572	20.7	315,560	43.9	248,567	34.6
1981	976,475	243,358	24.9	409,451	41.9	315,201	32.2

Table III. Trincomalee District — Population by ethnic groups

Year	All races	Sinhalese	%	Tamils	%	Moors*	%
1827	19,158	250	1.3	15,663	81.8	3,245	16.9
1881	22,197	935	4.2	14,394	64.8	5,746	25.9
1891	25,745	1,109	4.3	17,117	66.4	6,426	25.0
1901	28,441	1,203	4.2	17,069	60.0	8,258	29.0
1911	29,755	1,138	3.8	17,233	57.9	9,714	32.6
1921	34,112	1,501	4.4	18,586	54.5	12,846	37.7
1946	75,926	11,606	15.3	33,795	44.5	23,219	30.6
1953	83,917	15,296	18.2	37,517	44.7	28,616	34.1
1963	138,220	40,950	29.6	54,050	39.1	42,560	30.8
1971	188,245	54,744	29.1	71,749	38.1	59,924	31.8
1981	256,790	86,341	33.6	93,510	36.4	74,403	29.0

* The mother tongue of all Moors is Tamil.

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka.

Table IV. Population — Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka 1911–1981

Year	Provinces									Total Island
	Western	Sabrag- amuwa	North Western	Central	Uva	North Central	Northern	Eastern	Southern	
1911	81,076	83,332	16,832	265,911	69,873	2,953	2,970	886	7,150	530,983
1921	91,293	98,093	23,730	283,771	82,562	4,555	4,479	1,371	12,656	602,510
1946	90,604	122,856	13,289	395,728	127,164	3,097	8,708	4,565	14,578	760,589
1953	106,690	145,335	17,084	489,147	166,265	3,378	17,907	5,307	22,985	974,098
1963	97,920	170,500	18,220	560,430	210,710	1,910	28,150	5,940	29,070	1,122,850
1971	99,635	174,875	20,013	573,491	217,991	4,149	52,374	17,433	35,407	1,195,368
1981	60,746	132,308	9,391	376,055	144,959	990	63,431	12,045	25,308	825,233

Table V. Population — Persons of Indian origin 1911–1981

Year	(Estate population and working population)						
	Total Sri Lanka population (1)	Total Indian population (2)	(2) as a % of (1) (3)	Total pop. of Indians on estates (4)	(4) as a % of (2) (5)	No. of Indian workers on estates (6)	% of Indian workers on estates (7)
1911	4,106,350	529,712	12.9	457,765	86.2	—	—
1921	4,497,854	602,510	13.4	493,944	82.0	—	—
1946	6,657,339	780,589	11.7	665,853	85.3	—	—
1953	8,097,895	974,098	12.0	815,000	83.6	580,883	71.3
1963	10,590,060	1,122,850	10.6	932,090	82.5	571,852	61.4
1971	12,711,143	1,174,606	9.2	951,785	81.9	523,176	55.0
1981	14,850,001	825,233	5.6	666,000*	80.7	366,000*	55.0

Source: Economic Review, March 1980, People's Bank; Reports on Census of Population, Department of Census and Statistics

* Estimate

Note: The term "Indian origin" refers to persons of recent Indian origin.

The tables are reproduced from "The Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Economic Aspects," by T.Valluvan, Tamil Information Centre, London, May 1987.

democratic leadership of Chelvanayagam, the party gained unparalleled support among the Tamils. For many years the party appealed for unity and promised that given the unity of the Tamil people their demands could be achieved. The Tamil people responded by giving the federalists unprecedented support. No party in the country had received such massive support consistently for nearly two decades.

The four major demands of the party since 1956 had been: (1) A federal constitution, (2) Sinhalese and Tamil to be official languages, (3) end to the State-sponsored colonisation of Tamil areas, and (4) citizenship rights to all hill country Tamils (plantation workers). In 1976 none of these had been achieved. The two major parties, the UNP and the SLFP, totally ignored these demands. The left parties accepted the language and citizenship demands but rejected the other two. Efforts made to achieve a certain degree of autonomy, through the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact in 1957 and the Dudley Senanayake-Chelvanayagam Pact in 1965, had ended in failure.²⁸ With regard to language, regulations had been framed in 1966 to implement the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act. In practice this meant little. Tamils were not able to transact business with government offices in the Tamil language in most parts of the country, including Colombo. Under the Indo-Ceylon Pacts of 1966 and 1972, India and Ceylon had agreed to repatriate 40 to 50 per cent of the hill country Tamils (plantation workers made 'stateless' by the Citizenship Acts) to India. Only with regard to colonisation had some success been achieved. Colonisation had been slowed down in some areas for a period.

Attempts to organise non-violent campaigns met with mob violence in 1956. In 1957, the Federal Party threatened civil disobedience. The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact, its abrogation and subsequent events, finally led to the first major anti-Tamil pogrom in 1958. More than the uncivilised attacks on innocent Tamils by well organised Sinhalese mobs, the attitude of the Sinhala ruling class, marked by cunning, evasion and hypocrisy, came as a shock to the Tamils.

The two decades between 1956 and 1977 constitute a sad and sordid story of sporadic acts of violence, continuing discrimination and betrayals of agreements arrived at between the FP and successive governments. These two decades bred a deep feeling of insecurity among the Tamils which even the best of their friends among the Sinhalese never really understood or realised. Only a Tamil knew what it was to have been a Tamil in this country. The pinpricks and humiliations most Tamils were subjected to, irrespective of status or position, added insult to injury. The result was a hardening of attitudes. The outstanding problems not having been resolved, there was always the fear that 1958 could repeat itself. The left parties having entered into a coalition with the SLFP of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1964, brought a feeling of isolation to increasing numbers of Tamils. In 1966, Dudley Senanayake's UNP government, in which the Federal Party had accepted office, attempted to enact regulations providing for the use of Tamil for limited administrative purposes.²⁹ In adopting what has been called the '*masalavadai* line',³⁰ the two major left parties discredited themselves by organising a massive demonstration together with the SLFP against these long overdue concessions to the Tamils.

In 1961, the Sirima Bandaranaike government used the army to crush the peaceful *satyagraha* and civil disobedience movement organised by the Federal Party. In the first two weeks, the armed forces robbed, looted and assaulted several people.

It was Jaffna's first taste of violence. Again in 1974, when the final day's sessions of the International Association for Tamil Research culminated with a massive public meeting in Jaffna, the police ran berserk, resulting in the death of eight persons. But throughout this period there had been no major pogroms directed against the Tamil plantation workers in the Central and Uva Provinces. Kandy and Nuwara Eliya remained peaceful in spite of the fact that large communities of Tamils and Sinhalese were living in close proximity to each other.

The fact that a major pogrom like the one in 1958 had not occurred for two decades made some people perceive 1958 and subsequent events as aberrations, resulting from the actions of chauvinist extremists among the Sinhalese. People who desired unity hoped that Sinhala chauvinism was a passing phase. One reason why violence was contained in the pre-1977 period was the existence of a strong left movement. In 1956 and 1958, red-shirted Samasamajist and Communist youth leaguers appeared on the streets of Colombo in defence of the Tamils. The only factor that provided some sense of security to the Tamils living in Sinhalese areas after 1956 was the existence of a strong left movement. In 1961, when the armed forces ran riot in Tamil areas, LSSP's Edmund Samarakkody, made a remarkable speech in Parliament revealing the atrocities committed against the Tamils. Taking a principled stand on behalf of his party, he defended the right of the Tamils to resist the imposition of Sinhalese as the only official language. The left leaders in Parliament and through their publications, set a political climate that helped to contain the violence. The left movement had an island-wide base among the Tamils. In the 1956 elections, P.Kandiah of the Communist Party, won the Point Pedro seat in Jaffna. In 1956 and in the two elections in 1960, both the LSSP and the CP polled sizeable votes in the Northern Province. They posed an alternative to the Tamilism of the Federal Party. In 1960, the total number of votes polled by the left in the Tamil electorates was second only to that of the Federal Party. But after 1960, the left neglected its base in the north and began to concentrate purely on its Sinhalese constituency.

Meanwhile, between 1956 and the sweeping victory of the SLFP-LSSP-CP United Front in 1970, a steady polarisation of the political forces between left and right, as it was then perceived, was taking place in the Sinhalese areas. In the late sixties the continued existence of the Lake House Press in Colombo, the bastion of right wing politics, had been threatened. These powerful newspapers were now preoccupied in keeping the LSSP and the CP out of power. The role played by the Federal Party in helping to bring down the SLFP-LSSP coalition in December 1964, and the subsequent decision to support the forming of a UNP coalition government, which called itself a 'national government', toned down the chauvinism of the press, and its patron the UNP, for a while.

In the context of a life and death struggle between the UNP and the SLFP-LSSP-CP coalition, which reached its peak in 1970, it became convenient for both sides to forget the Tamils. The Tamil issue did not figure prominently in the 1965, 1970 and 1977 elections in the Sinhalese electorates, unlike in the 1956 and 1960

elections. This was partly due to the fact that the two major parties kept open the option of seeking Tamil support in the event of their not getting an absolute majority. Among Tamil supporters of the United Front there were hopes that a shift to the left would inevitably bring a solution to the problems that had plagued the Tamils. But when it came to power the United Front government achieved nothing of the sort. In fact, the enactment of the 1972 Republican Constitution³¹ was felt by the Tamils to be a total betrayal.

The 1972 Constitution

With the formation of the United Front government in 1970, the left parties occupied the centre of the political stage and practically dominated parliamentary proceedings. While they ignored the Tamils and their demands, at the same time they did not provide much room for Sinhalese chauvinism to express itself in anti-Tamil violence. The left leaders were not Sinhala Buddhist chauvinists. Their failure lay in the fact that, instead of pressurising Mrs. Bandaranaike and the SLFP in the direction of a more just and democratic society, they allowed themselves to be used by Mrs. Bandaranaike in consolidating her own position. She utilised the left alliance to maximum advantage. Now, for the first time, her party had a base in Jaffna through the LSSP and the CP. She was even able to visit Jaffna (something that neither her husband as Prime Minister, nor Jayewardene as President were able to do; the latter paid a brief visit in the midst of his 1982 election campaign) though, as she confessed later, with a heavy armed escort, to open the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka.³² Men like Alfred Duraiyappah, the Mayor of Jaffna, P. Nagalingam, long time LSSP loyalist, and V. Ponnambalam, the Jaffna district secretary of the CP, were able to provide the necessary support in Jaffna in the face of the growing militancy of Tamil youth.

The enactment of the 1972 Republican Constitution, with the left in power, was a deep disappointment to the Tamils. The failure to consider the provision of regional autonomy resulted in a walk-out by Tamil representatives in the Constituent Assembly. Far from meeting the aspirations of the Tamils, things were made worse by enshrining 'Sinhala only' in the Constitution. In addition, an entirely new provision was written into the Constitution, giving Buddhism a special place in the State. The time-honoured 'Lanka' of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party now became 'Sri Lanka', losing all its pretensions to a secular State, leave alone a democratic and socialist society. The Tamil equivalent of Lanka is Ilankai, which sounds more like Lanka. With the *Sri* added, the similarity and what little was left of a common identity was weakened.

The honorific '*Sri*' was a symbol that brought bitter memories to the Tamils. In a tactless move in 1958, the government had introduced the Sinhalese letter '*Sri*' in issuing motor vehicle numbers. When the first *Sri* numbered public buses were sent to Jaffna, the Federal Party launched an 'anti-*Sri*' campaign in which the Sinhalese *Sri* was erased and replaced with a Tamil *Sri*. This sparked off a campaign in which Tamil sign boards in many parts of the country were painted over with tar. Several Tamils had

the Sinhalese *Sri* written on their doors, vehicles and sometimes on their bodies by intimidating Sinhalese mobs. The *Sri* and anti-*Sri* campaign was one of the factors that poisoned the political atmosphere leading to the anti-Tamil violence of 1958. The circumstances under which the name change took place has made Sri Lanka a word of contempt, especially among Tamil youth and children, and is looked upon as a symbol of their humiliation and second class status. It helps the Tamils in an immensely spontaneous way to reject a Sri Lankan identity, in the same way as the Sri Lankan flag and the national anthem were rejected.

The leader of the Federal Party, Chelvanayagam, resigned his seat in Parliament and chose to use the consequent bye-election to seek a mandate from the Tamil people, both to reject the 1972 Constitution and to make the demand for a separate State. The bye-election was not held for two years. When it was finally held, the governing coalition of the SLFP, LSSP and CP marshalled all its forces against Chelvanayagam in the Kankasanturai constituency in Jaffna. The candidate pitted against him was V. Ponnambalam of the CP. In a hard-fought election Chelvanayagam won. But Ponnambalam polled a sizeable vote. He later confessed that he had agreed to contest on promises he subsequently realised were never meant to be kept. According to him the CP had printed thousands of pamphlets, ready to be released on the eve of the elections, promising an amendment to the Constitution providing regional autonomy to the Tamils. The pamphlets were, however, withdrawn on the instructions of the SLFP high command. He finally quit the CP in 1976, and with him went the last bastion of the left movement in the north.³³ This whole episode was symptomatic of the way in which the national question was approached by the left, centre and right in Lanka. Promises were made to suit the exigencies of the moment, sometimes in good faith, but never kept.

Self-determination and the secessionist demand

Facing almost total isolation and with negligible support within the dominant Sinhala nation, the Tamils drifted towards a declaration in favour of secession. The Federal Party and the Tamil Congress had finally come together to form the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). The CWC was also in the front for a brief period. The TULF, at its first national convention held at Pannakam, Vaddukoddai in May 1976, declared that:

“The Tamils of Ceylon, by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history of independent existence as a separate State over a distinct territory for several centuries until they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders and, above all, by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese and this convention announces to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Sinhalese, who are using the power

they have wrongly usurped to deprive the Tamil nation of its territory, language, citizenship, economic life, opportunities of employment and education, thereby depriving all the attributes of nationhood of the Tamil people."

The convention further resolved that: "The restoration and recognition of the free, sovereign, secular, socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent to every nation, has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil Nation in this country."³⁴

The tone and content of the above suggests that this resolution was framed more in anger and frustration, rather than after rational thought weighing all the possible consequences of such an extremist demand. The TULF succumbed to severe pressure from its youth wing. It is now clear that the leaders of the front, Chelvanayagam included, did not have the faintest idea as to what they were going to do after adopting this resolution. One possibility that the TULF spokesmen placed before the Tamils was that with an appropriate change in the international situation, a Bangladesh type of action could take place leading to the realisation of a Tamil State. The Bangladesh model was one of the more picturesque figments of their imagination.

It never occurred to the proponents of Tamil Eelam that history does not necessarily repeat itself and certainly not in neat models concocted in their imagination. They were playing a dangerous game for which the Tamil people have paid a heavy price. But the TULF was acting true to character. For nearly five decades the Tamil Congress and its successor, the Federal Party, had played on the emotions of the Tamil people. Having failed to gain any rights for the Tamil people based on their four point programme since 1957, something dramatic had to be done to retain the support of the people. The TULF, far from being a front, became a monolithic party. It did not broaden its base nor did it tolerate alternative positions taken by other Tamil groups. It placed top priority in winning the 1977 elections. It was the old parliamentarianist game again. Their platform speakers, a new generation of young men, relished indulging in liberation rhetoric. They could not see that this demand was virtually impossible to realise within the framework of bourgeois parliamentary politics.

In its 1977 election manifesto the TULF said that the Tamil nation "gropes in the dark for identity and finds itself driven to the brink of devastation." The devastation did come in the next decade, but its starting point was the secessionist demand. The TULF was consistently reluctant to work out a political programme in alliance with the left movement and the Sinhalese working class. The TULF and its precursors evaded this option. From 1948 to the present time, Tamil bourgeois leadership has sought to make its alliances either with the UNP or the SLFP. Much was made of Lenin and the right to self-determination. But then the very title of Lenin's essay in which he develops his views on national self-determination is titled *On the National Question and Proletarian Internationalism*. Quoting Lenin on the right to self-determination was meant primarily to give Tamil leadership a progressive and revolutionary image in the eyes of Tamil youth who were fast becoming radicalised.³⁵

The tragedy of it all was that the TULF did reflect the aspirations of the Tamil people in a profound way. It was said during the 1977 elections that any stick with a TULF flag would have won. Many of its parliamentarians following the example set by their leader Chelvanayagam, in comparison with their counterparts on the Sinhalese side and across the Palk Straits in Tamil Nadu, lived simple lives and sacrificed personal gain and professional advancement by adhering to the party's objectives. The TULF parliamentarians were not opportunists. They were accessible to the people and were genuinely concerned about the predicament in which the Tamil people were caught. Even their political opponents conceded that they were, as persons, men of integrity and sincerity. But, in the mid-seventies they had little to offer politically. The Tamil Eelam cry was the swan song of the five decades of utterly bankrupt politics of Tamil leaders elected to Parliament.

The demand made in 1951, for an "autonomous Tamil linguistic State within the framework of a Federal Union of Ceylon, as the rational and natural culmination of centuries of close association between the two nations in this their common motherland..." stressed the closeness and oneness that could lead to unity in diversity. These words had a noble ring in contrast to the bitter, antagonistic and uncalled for references to a 'slave nation' and 'new colonial masters' which had no objective basis in 1976, at least not yet. The federal demand in stressing autonomy within the framework of one State was a correct demand. History has justified this demand. There is today support for this demand, no doubt, but necessarily couched in different terms. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, internationally acclaimed, is a major step in this direction. The failure to achieve that demand over two decades demonstrated the weaknesses of the movement and its politics rather than the demand itself.

It was a major political blunder for the TULF to have asserted that the Tamils were a "separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory... a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese..." and to demand "the free, sovereign, secular, socialist State of Tamil Eelam." It was a romantic and irresponsible cry. One of the slogans in the liberation rhetoric was that the Tamils were not asking for separation, but for a restoration of their sovereignty. This was an attempt to reverse the flow of history. Imagine applying the same principle in India, or for that matter anywhere in Asia. The attempt to find justification for self-determination in history, rather than in the contemporary situation, demonstrated a lack of understanding of the processes of history. Eventually, the demand for a sovereign State made it impossible for the TULF and the Tamil groups involved in armed struggle to detract from this demand with self-respect and without being branded 'traitors'.

In making the demand, inadequate attention had been paid to the experience in the Indian sub-continent. The creation of Pakistan, and subsequently Bangladesh, has not resolved the pressing problems of any one of those peoples. On the contrary, Pakistan and Bangladesh have remained militaristic and authoritarian States with serious violations of human rights within both States. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh spend substantial amounts on defense, diverting valuable resources that should ideally

go toward improving the quality of life of the people. Any attempt to divide Lanka into two sovereign States would have created more problems than those that were sought to be resolved. There is already enough evidence to suggest that the people would not have enjoyed democratic rights and that secession would have led inevitably to highly authoritarian neo-fascist regimes on both sides.

State terrorism and counter-violence

Prior to 1977, anti-Tamil violence was primarily in the Sinhalese areas. In 1956 and 1958, there had been violence in Amparai, in the Eastern Province. By that time the area had been converted from a Tamil-speaking (Tamils and Moors) majority area into a Sinhalese majority area, through colonisation schemes. This was also true to a lesser extent in Trincomalee, where again large Sinhalese settlements had been established within a traditionally Tamil majority area. But most of the violence was in the Sinhalese areas where Jaffna Tamils lived and worked, in many cases for generations. Often attempts were made to drive the Tamils out of the Sinhalese areas.

In and after 1977, the violence was more systematic, well planned and co-ordinated and allegedly financed and backed by powerful persons both within the establishment and by chauvinist opposition forces. In 1977, a major target for attack by well organised Sinhalese mobs had been the helpless and unorganised plantation workers, who were later evacuated to the Vavuniya district by non-governmental Tamil refugee organisations. Equally important was that in 1977, security forces began systematic attacks on unarmed Tamil civilians. This first occurred in Jaffna when the police set fire to the Jaffna market. This incident, followed by malicious rumours that Sinhalese were being killed in Jaffna, sparked off the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1977. The event that has been best documented and received world-wide publicity was the burning of the city of Jaffna for three consecutive nights, including the public library with its 95,000 volumes, by the police in 1981.³⁶ These acts of violence, characterised as State terrorism, became the starting point for the effective internationalisation of the issue which had now become one of systematic oppression of the Tamils.³⁷ In 1958, the security forces, once given the power, crushed the anti-Tamil violence. In and after 1977 they became the main protagonists of violence.

In July 1977, the UNP, under the leadership of J.R. Jayewardene, was returned to power with control over five-sixths of the seats in Parliament. By 1977, the mainstream left had been wiped out in parliamentary terms and had ceased to be a major force in the island's politics. Ironically, Jayewardene assumed power with a slogan calling him 'saviour of the nation' and highly publicised promises of a 'just and righteous society'. He came to power with substantial support from the Tamils resident in the predominantly Sinhalese provinces. For a brief while from 1977 to 1978, there were hopes that this UNP government would resolve the problem through the promised all-party round table conference. However, the 1978 Constitution, while making some concessions on language rights, made no provision for regional

autonomy. These language rights, if granted in 1956, may have satisfied the Tamil people. But by 1977, regional autonomy, rather than language, had become the major issue. Sporadic acts of violence by Tamil groups became the excuse for increasing repression through the enactment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the provisions of which were indiscriminately used. This led to grave and widespread violations of human rights, which in turn strengthened secessionist tendencies.

From 1956 to 1977 the Tamils did not fight back. When attacked in the Sinhalese areas they ran for their lives and from refugee camps seized the earliest opportunity to reach the safety of their own homeland in the north and east. They placed themselves at the mercy of the State's security forces, who in turn were becoming increasingly hostile. The Sinhala dominated State provided no compensation for loss of life or property. The Tamils were a weak and docile people, primarily concerned with acquiring an education that would lead to the security of a job in a neo-colonial society. Hurt, humiliated and oppressed for two decades they began to lose faith in democratic processes and the futile attempts made to seek solutions through negotiations. Meanwhile, almost unnoticed, a new generation of youth had come into existence. Born in the decade of 'Sinhala only', carrying the stamp of a second class status, these youth had practically no prospects of employment in Colombo and the seven Sinhala provinces; and angered by an openly discriminative system of university admissions called 'standardisation', these young people sought solutions in armed struggle. These Tamil youth were serious about secession. Militant Tamil youth did not indulge in the rhetoric of liberation. They resorted to action at considerable personal sacrifice. They carried in their collective consciousness the thoughts and emotions of a people deeply hurt, with legitimate fears of being dispossessed in their own homeland.³⁸

Today's conflict is seemingly one between two nationalities; in reality it is between an oppressor nation state pitted against an oppressed nationality, and in its essence not necessarily between the Sinhalese people and the Tamil people. This distinction is vital especially as we look at the train of events that have torn the two peoples apart. On both sides leaders played on the fears of the people. The Sinhalese elite never attempted to educate the Sinhala people politically, but used their genuine aspirations in a most opportunistic way. In fact, the vast majority of both the Sinhalese and the Tamils, share a common poverty in a typical Third World scenario and have little to gain in improving their quality of life in socio-economic terms from this conflict. Both have sought to achieve through legitimate nationalist aspirations democratic rights and an egalitarian society. Unscrupulous politicians gave this nationalism a chauvinistic twist and turned them against each other. It is worth noting that in many parts of the country both peoples have peacefully co-existed through these decades of conflict. At the height of the anti-Tamil pogroms of 1956, 1977 and 1983, there were notable instances when Sinhalese people provided safety and refuge to Tamils.

On the other hand, it is also true that many did not attempt to help or simply ignored what happened. This kind of behaviour was not surprising taking into account an educational system that perpetuated myths and bred anti-Tamil prejudices. In

addition, the news media was manipulated in such a way that the Sinhalese people were never told the true story of what was happening in the country, especially in the Tamil areas. They were never told, for instance, that until 1985 not a single Sinhalese civilian had been wilfully killed in the Northern Province by politically inspired Tamils. To this day many of them do not know that it was the police who burnt down the Jaffna Public Library in 1981. In this context it is worth noting that Tamils were rarely attacked by people resident in their immediate neighbourhood. Most of the attacks came from well organised *thugs* and mobs brought from distant places to attack Tamil homes. The propaganda war that the government launched against the Tamils distorted the perceptions of many Sinhalese who were made to see a 'terrorist' in every Tamil.

By 1985, the acts of violence had escalated, bringing with it large scale killings and massive destruction. Tens of thousands of Tamils had become refugees and displaced persons. If the TULF's 1976 demand for self-determination, including secession, was premature and irresponsible, by 1985 to many Tamils there appeared to be no other alternative but secession. It still would not have provided a solution to the problem. Hence, the initiative passed into India's hands. With the Thimpu talks of 1985, India effectively intervened. India categorically rejected attempts at a military solution by the Sri Lankan government. At the same time India rejected the demand made by Tamil groups for the sovereign State of Tamil Eelam. From that time onwards India's efforts were directed towards arriving at a compromise that would satisfy both sides.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 29 July 1987, has brought the country to an entirely new stage in the attempts made to resolve the national question. It has been accepted by the governing UNP, and the left movement. Exceptions on the Sinhalese side are Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP and the JVP.³⁹ Mrs. Bandaranaike is doing exactly what the leaders of the UNP did in 1957, when Mr. Bandaranaike offered regional autonomy to the Tamils. This has been the tragedy of Sinhalese bourgeois leadership, the total absence of statesmanship at the cost of bleeding the country. On the Tamil side, most Tamil groups have accepted the agreement. A notable exception is the powerful LTTE, which was initially pressurised into accepting the agreement by India. Subsequently a series of unfortunate events have resulted in all out warfare between the Indian forces and the LTTE.

The failure of the left

In the forties and fifties the left movement in Lanka was strong, both in terms of a highly organised and politicised labour movement and its electoral base. The left movement had the potential to provide an alternative to the country. The trade union movement, the student movements in the universities and large sections of the intelligentsia were left-oriented, if not directly under the leadership of the left. To cite just one among many instances, when the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, re-opened after the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1958, the Tamil students returned to the campus with a deep sense of insecurity and humiliation. The student union in the campus was

controlled by the Trotskyites (LSSP) and the Communists. Both groups, together with the support of the Student Christian Movement and the Catholic Students Federation, were able to carry through an overwhelming vote (open vote by head count) in favour of a resolution calling upon the government to revoke the Sinhala Only Act and to enact Sinhalese and Tamil as the official languages of the country.⁴⁰ Those were the heroic years of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist Party. It was fashionable to be a left supporter or sympathiser. The rights of the minorities, be they citizenship rights for the Tamil plantation workers, or language rights for the Tamils, were vigorously espoused and gallantly defended.

The emergence of the new left in the late sixties and seventies once again placed the national question on the agenda of the left movement. Both the LSSP and CP had failed miserably in their politics of coalition with the SLFP. After the 1977 parliamentary election debacle they once again went back to a policy of justice to the Tamils. But this time these parties did not enjoy a powerful mass base. Among the Tamils, there remained lurking suspicions of the left. After 1977, the new left adopted the national self-determination demand. The parties that have accepted the right of the Tamil people to self-determination are the NSSP, the RCL,⁴¹ and at one stage even the JVP. The CMU,⁴² a leading trade union, has also done so.⁴³ The CP has accepted self-determination, excluding the right to secession. The LSSP stands for regional autonomy.

The new left, consisting of a multiplicity of Trotskyite groups, has taken a consistent and principled stand on justice to the Tamils, including self-determination. But these groups have not been able to make any progress among the Tamils. Their perennial dissensions and fragmentation, a feature that has characterised Trotskyites all over the world, partly accounts for this failure. The same reason perhaps accounts for their failure among the Sinhalese. These parties have not been able to take a common stand on grave issues that affect the Sinhalese people themselves, such as the 1980 strike in which 100,000 workers lost their jobs, the 1982 presidential elections, and the referendum by which the life of Parliament was extended for six years, effectively disenfranchising the whole country. By the eighties the CP alone retained a base, though a diminishing one, among the Tamils due to the efforts of an older generation of loyalists.

In the 1970 elections the left fared badly in the north. In 1977, they did not even put up a contest, except for a token candidature in a couple of electorates. In the early seventies a militant youth group was coming into existence right within the youth wing of the Federal Party and on its periphery. This group, which was in the forefront in rejecting the 1972 Constitution, was jailed and tortured by the United Front government. This made it impossible for Tamil youth to have any faith in the left parties of the south. The parties of the left had recognised a progressive content in the politics of the SLFP, which was Sinhala nationalist and were prepared to overlook the strong chauvinist element within the party. But the LSSP and the CP failed to acknowledge the progressive content within the Federal Party, which was Tamil

nationalist, though without doubt contained within its ranks a strong Tamil chauvinist element. In retrospect, it appears that this was a misperception for which the country was to pay a bitter price. The left failed to see, that in the same way that the politics of the Tamil Congress had failed, that sooner or later the Federal Party and its successor the TULF, was bound to fail, creating a political and leadership vacuum providing fertile ground for a radical and an all-island nationalist alternative.

This was amply demonstrated when the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality was founded in 1979. MIRJE was founded in the aftermath of the enactment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act,⁴⁴ the declaration of a state of emergency in the Tamil provinces, and the consequent indiscriminate arrests and late-night murders in Jaffna, allegedly by the police. MIRJE consisted of representatives from every left party, several trade unions, human rights groups, and included Christian organisations concerned with social and economic justice. Its membership was composed of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. The northern branch of MIRJE enjoyed substantial support in Jaffna, including that of sections within the TULF and its youth wing, break-away groups from the TULF, trade unions, students and teachers from the Jaffna University and the Jaffna press. The northern branch was able to provide the organisational framework for an on-going dialogue between Sinhalese from the south, including members of the Buddhist priesthood, and the Tamils in the north. It also organised several meetings, seminars and *satyagraha* campaigns in which many Sinhalese participants were able to act in solidarity with the Tamils in defending human rights.

The support for an all-island approach to the pressing problems of the day were demonstrated in electoral terms at the presidential elections and the subsequent referendum. The TULF had decided not to participate in the presidential elections, and did not oppose Jayewardene, thereby paving the way for his victory. It did participate in the referendum advocating a 'no' vote but did not launch a major campaign. In spite of this, the voting figures provide interesting reading. SLFP's Kobbekaduwa, supported by the CP in a poorly organised campaign, polled 77,300 (35.4 per cent) votes in the Jaffna district. Kumar Ponnambalam of the Tamil Congress obtained 87,263 (40 per cent) and Jayewardene of the UNP got 40,780 (20.5 per cent). The LSSP, NSSP and JVP polled a few thousand votes each. In the referendum of 1982,⁴⁵ with a total poll of 290,849 (58.9 per cent of the total registered voters), 265,534 (91.2 per cent) cast a 'no' vote as against a mere 25,315 (8.7 per cent) casting a 'yes' vote.⁴⁶ Sympathisers of Tamil militant groups that had called for a boycott of the presidential elections changed their position and approved participation in the referendum. On the other hand the NSSP, one of the new left groups, having participated in the presidential elections, called for a boycott of the referendum.

The above suggests that Jaffna, with the largest concentration of Tamils in the island, was capable of rallying round in support of the forces of the left in the context of both Tamil grievances and all-island political issues. The mainstream left did not

pay adequate attention to the national question in a post-colonial society. This led to its failure in taking a consistent stand on justice to the Tamils. The LSSP and the CP persisted in perceptions that may have been relevant in the colonial period but were no longer valid in the period after decolonisation. They failed to draw a distinction between the oppressor nationalism of the Sinhalese ruling class on the one hand, and that of the progressive content in the struggle of the Tamil people as an oppressed nationality on the other. In making a simplistic call on the Tamil people to reject its 'communalist' leadership and come under their leadership, the mainstream left failed to draw a distinction between the grievances and aspirations of the Tamil people and the parliamentarianist politics of their bourgeois leaders. In fact, the LSSP and the CP had themselves become victims of parliamentarianism. No attempt was made in the fifties and sixties to grapple with the national question on the Leninist principle of the right to self-determination. The CP adopted this principle only for a brief period in 1944. They failed to respond to the aspirations of the Tamil people for regional autonomy. This failure to grasp the essence of the national question was at the heart of the failure of the left to bring the Tamils into the mainstream of all-island politics.

A movement of victims

Events in Lanka have moved at a rapid pace, especially since 23 July 1983. It is difficult to evaluate the situation with any finality. The political situation is ever changing. It is fluid, confusing and full of contradictions. The major actors have proliferated with time. Apart from the political parties that have existed within the framework of Lanka's electoral politics, other groups have emerged, each having an impact on the situation. The authority of the Sri Lankan State has virtually collapsed. Its writ does not run in the north and the east and it is being increasingly challenged in the south. As Hector Abhayawardene put it, there was a political vacuum and India got sucked in. Hence the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of 29 July 1987. The north and east passed into the uneasy control of the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

V. Karalasingham, the well known Samasamajist in his *The Way Out for the Tamil Speaking People*, first published in 1963, stressed the indivisibility of the struggle and a correct policy in the struggle against reaction. "It is high time that the Tamil speaking people paid attention to the problems of method and leadership of their struggle as these are fast becoming the key questions." He appealed to the youth and said, "Not only do they have no responsibility for the inglorious past of the last few decades, but their own interests demand that they find a road out of the blind alley in which they find themselves because of their fathers' and grandfathers' politics." In 1977 he repeated this appeal: "But at the moment the ball is in the court of Tamil youth. Somewhere along the line, the politics which they are pursuing, took the wrong turn; while it is true they bear no responsibility, it nonetheless behoves them to ascertain where it took the wrong turn."⁴⁷

In the late seventies, when Tamil militancy was in its infancy, it was customary among some left groups to see a progressive content in the Tamil struggle for

self-determination. In fact one Trotskyite group went so far as to describe the growing militancy in the Tamil areas as the beginning of the South Asian revolution. After 1983, the armed conflict escalated rapidly. Tamil militant groups were more powerful and were in a confident mood. They did not make attempts to identify and relate with groups, movements and parties among the Sinhalese that were sympathetic and supportive of the Tamils as an oppressed nationality, and recognised their right to self-determination.

The oppression of the Tamils has become internationalised. The indiscriminate detention, torture and attacks on Tamil civilians and the large scale destruction that took place in the Tamil areas by the State's security forces helped to internationalise the issue. But questions regarding the political and economic programme of the militant groups remains unanswered. Further disillusionment and doubts about the Tamil armed groups emerged with the first major massacre in 1985, of Sinhalese civilians in Anuradhapura, allegedly by a Tamil group. Subsequently, other brutal massacres occurred in the Trincomalee district. The failure to form a united front (there was a short lived Eelam National Liberation Front) and the consequent internecine conflict among Tamil militant groups further aggravated the situation. Some armed Tamil groups have proved themselves no better than the Lankan security forces. That which is perceived as a legitimate and just struggle for human and democratic rights is now seen as one that had degenerated into a senseless and self-defeating conflict. It could no longer be said, as Karalasingham did in 1963 and 1977, that Tamil youth bore no responsibility. Blind worship of the power that grew out of the gun characterised the struggle, while the politics and ideology of the man behind the gun were ignored.

The Tamil people in these years have been through a period of never ending, tragic violence. A generation of young people, some of the most dedicated and promising, have lost their lives or have languished in jails, tortured and broken in spirit. Many quit schools, universities and jobs to fight a guerilla war with all its consequent risks and sufferings. This happened in a society that was known for its docility and conservatism. Tamil society for generations had placed a high premium on education, and the security and relative stability that a white collar job provided. What then did their youth fight for? The sacrifices made, the valuable lives lost — were they in vain? The young people involved in this struggle believed that they fought for a just, egalitarian and democratic society. This belief was shared by the vast majority of the Tamil people living within the country and abroad. The question that emerges is, 'Was there a progressive content in this unprecedented nationalist struggle by the Tamil people?' The question is not new in the context of nationalist struggles. Divergent viewpoints have been expressed on the subject.

To quote from Davis again, "A nationalist movement is ethical and democratic as long as it fights seriously for the rights of the underdog. But in this day and age this must mean that nationalism, in order to be ethical, must be anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist." As pointed out so well by Regis Debray, "nationalism must involve revolutionary socialism and socialism must involve revolutionary nationalism. It is not

possible to think of one without the other.”⁴⁸ The rhetoric apart, doubts have remained on whether dominant sections of the Tamil movement were anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. They did not have a worldview. They failed to see the predicament of the Tamil people as a segment of the global crisis that we are in. There were no doubt exceptions, both among movements and within specific groups. On the other hand, the socialists of both the traditional left and the new left in the country did not give adequate importance to revolutionary nationalism.

Opinions differ on how progressive such struggles are. Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein in their debate *Dynamics of Global Crisis*, have focussed on points that in the writer's view provide some clues to an understanding of the crisis in Lanka. Salient points in their discussion that have a relevance to this crisis are noted here. Frank having surveyed the global scene arrives at the conclusion that several instances represent the effective sacrifice of socialist interests to national and nationalistic exigencies. “Where bourgeois nationalism has come into conflict with socialism or internationalism, nationalism has won out like iron against wood.”

In his view, the world economic crisis is reducing the ability of most national economies to satisfy the economic necessities and aspirations of more and more people. Many of these people, therefore, turn to one form or another of nationalism to express their discontent and to seek relief:

“... self-styled national minority liberation movements demand ethnic and regional autonomy, if not sovereignty... in the struggle over shrinking or more slowly growing national economic pies, both the national State and the subnational anti-State nationalist movements and forces increasingly crosscut and divide the popular socialist anti-capitalist and often even anti-imperialist popular movements and forces, rather than identifying or fusing with them.”

Further, separatist nationalist movements tend to become pawns in the international power game.

In contemporary times, mass mobilisation frequently taking place in the Third World are under ethnic, nationalist and religious movements. These movements are largely expressions of discontent with the economic situation. Many of these movements, including those that make demands for home rule through autonomy or sovereignty, take on the character of resistance to the existing orders. But, as Frank suggests, “many of these movements are manipulated by the capitalist right and divide the labour left; few challenge State power *per se*; and none reject participation in the international division of labour of the world capitalist economic system.”⁴⁹

Samir Amin, in his discussion, focuses attention on the significance of this other ‘social fact’, i.e., the nation. He points out that an analysis of the conflicts of our time, be they internal or international, ideological, social, economic, or political, must be set in their world context, for they interact and take significance in this setting. He recognises two opposite theses here. One interprets these conflicts as an open struggle

between the socialist and capitalist camps. The other thesis analyses the world situation as one where nations and the States predominate and “the struggles of our times do not appear as struggles between socialism and capitalism, but as national struggles,” and nationalism seems to be the predominant force everywhere. “The peoples of the periphery are responding in their own way to this impasse: by populist uprisings and the renewal of traditional ideologies. To confront nationalism with socialism is therefore to fail to understand the nature of the real issues at stake in the contemporary conflict.” Amin, however, adds that a theory of the nation must still be constructed and that we are dealing with a social reality that is not independent of social classes.⁵⁰

In Wallerstein’s view, there is no model of a contemporary ‘revolution’. There are many vaguer, but nonetheless quite real politico-cultural modes of rejection: The civilisational ‘renaissances’, the pan-movements, the assertion of the claims of ‘minorities’, the women’s movement:

“These are movements of victims... this mass mobilisation has tended to focus on immediate enemies.... We have seen a search for new modes of expressing rejection of the existing world order... throughout the period of crisis, the ‘cultural nationalist’ component of these mass mobilisations has grown stronger, and ‘nationalism’ is today seen less as a ‘bourgeois’ response to workers’ movements than a popular response to capitalist universalistic ideology.”⁵¹

All concede that one of the historical phenomena on which Marxist and socialist thought was clearly deficient was the importance given to nationalist and/or populist movements and that they were historically underestimated. For Amin, “nationalism today cannot develop significantly in the absence of a socialist content.” Frank takes a largely negative view of the spread of populist nationalism (including movements grouped around religion, race, or language). He believes that the “nationalist element ultimately overcomes any socialist perfume, and that therefore nationalism is ultimately bourgeois and not antisystemic....” Indeed, he argues that the contrary might be true, that “nationalism is the optimal mode of bringing the rebellious back into the system.” Amin, Arrighi, and Wallerstein disagree. For them:

“Anything that prevents world capitalism from using more primitive forms of exploitation is good, both in itself and because it deepens the contradictions. While not every movement that might be called nationalist fits this category, a large number of movements, especially outside of the European zone, are basically anti-capitalist in spirit and social base, unlike most nationalist movements of the nineteenth century. While their ideology may be confused and unoriginal, their overall impact has been positive and quite unlike the racist xenophobic movements that are constantly re-emerging in the core countries.”⁵²

In spite of its failures the Tamil struggle has nevertheless been a movement of victims, an oppressed people struggling against oppression, and to that extent its impact has a positive content. The ideology, however, remains confused and the contradictions have no doubt deepened, while the country remains in a state of deepening crisis.

Notes

This essay is a reflection on, and an attempt at interpreting, the history of the last four decades in the context of the national question in Lanka. It is an exercise in self-criticism. The writer is a Tamil who spent his early years in the Federated States of Malaya under Japanese occupation and returned in 1946, to what was then a peaceful Ceylon. Since then he has been part observer, part participant in the unfolding events that have led to the tragic situation of the 1980s. Violence since 1956 has touched us Tamils, almost everyone of us, in a very personal way. What happened will remain in the collective memories of the Tamils for generations to come. That is all the more reason why we should try to see what went wrong, especially within ourselves as a people.

1. Horace B. Davis, Towards a Marxist Theory of Nationalism, Monthly Review Press, London, 1978, p.31.
2. Anthony D. Smith, Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1979, p.viii.
3. Kalim Bahadur, "Islam and the National Question in Pakistan," in South Asia in Transition – Conflicts and Tensions, (ed.) Kalim Bahadur, Patriot Publishers, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 141 & 145.
4. Alfred Cobban, The Nation State and National Self-Determination, Collins, The Fontana Library, 1969, p.241.
5. Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Revival, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp.8 & 9.
6. Donoughmore Commission: Special Commission set up by the British Government to report on and make recommendations for constitutional reforms, 1927–28. The Chairman of the Commission was the Earl of Donoughmore and hence so named. Recommendations included the granting of universal adult suffrage, a fair degree of self-government and abolition of communal representation. The Donoughmore period 1931 to 1946 is noteworthy for the beginnings and rapid growth of the left movement. It also marked the birth of modern Sinhalese and Tamil consciousness and its political manifestation labelled 'communalism'.
7. Ceylon – Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution, July 1928, London, p.39. This section of the Donoughmore Report has been compulsory reading for generations of students in the country without tangible results in preventing the poisoning of political consciousness!
8. Soulbury Constitution: Named after Lord Soulbury who was chairman of the Special Commission sent in 1944 to report on Constitutional Reforms. Introduced the parliamentary system and responsible government with substantial reserve powers retained by the Governor. With the grant of independence in 1948 the same Constitution was retained, with a mere revocation of the reserve powers of the Governor and the Colonial Secretary. A Constituent Assembly was not called to draft a constitution for an independent Ceylon. Lord Soulbury was also the first Governor-General of independent Ceylon.
9. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, Allied Publishers, India, 1962, pp.135–136.
10. J.S. Furnivall, (1945), "Some Problems of Tropical Economy," quoted in Gordon Bowker and John Carrier, Race and Ethnic Relations: Sociological Readings, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1976, p.125.
11. Several books, reports and articles pertaining to the conflict in Lanka have appeared in this decade. Listed here are six publications that are important and of lasting value.
 - i) Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Sri Lanka: 31 January to 9 February 1982, London, July 1983.

- ii) Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka, Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka in July–August 1981 on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists, by Professor Virginia A. Leary, ICJ, Geneva, August 1983.
- iii) Sri Lanka: A Mounting Tragedy of Errors, Report of a Mission to Sri Lanka in January 1984 on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists and its British Section, Justice, by Paul Sieghart, ICJ and Justice, London, March 1984.
- iv) Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka, Social Scientists Association, Colombo, 1984.
- v) Sri Lanka: The Ethnic Conflict – Myths, Realities and Perspectives, Committee for Rational Development, Navrang, New Delhi, 1984.
- vi) "Sri Lanka: Racism and the Authoritarian State," Race and Class, London, Volume XXVI, Number 1, Summer 1984.

It is worth noting that with the exception of a few contributors in the latter three publications, the above publications were written and published by non-Tamils. The last two include an invaluable and detailed bibliographical guide (over 400 listings) by H.A.I. Goonetilleke, Lanka's distinguished bibliographer and former Librarian, University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya – "July 1983 and the National Question in Sri Lanka – A Bibliography."

- 12. Communalism or Nationalism – A Reply to the Speech delivered by G.G. Poonambalam Esq. with a foreword by S.H. Perinbanayagam, Youth Congress, Jaffna. Thirumakal Press, Chunnakam, Sri Lanka, December 1939.
- 13. Ceylon Daily News, 19 April 1928. Also "The Jaffna Youth Congress," by Santasilan Kadirgamar, Handy Perinbanayagam: A Memorial Volume, Thirumakal Press, Chunnakam, Sri Lanka, 1980.
- 14. Suriyamal movement: Social movement of the 1930s, directed towards raising funds by selling the Suriyamal (sun flower) to help the victims of malaria, mostly peasants. Anti-imperialist in character the movement brought together workers, youth and intelligentsia and laid the foundations for the formation of the LSSP in 1935.
- 15. Pieter Keuneman, House of Representatives, Hansard, 14 June 1956.
- 16. The Ceylon Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948 and the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act No.3 of 1949. The former laid down the law and prescribed qualifications necessary for persons to become citizens of the country. Any Tamil could have been called upon to prove his or her citizenship, though the Act was primarily directed at excluding from citizenship the descendants of Tamil immigrant labour that had been brought into Ceylon by the British from South India in the nineteenth century. The latter provided an opportunity to these people to obtain 'citizenship by registration' but the procedure was made cumbersome requiring documentary evidence that practically made it impossible for most of these people to become citizens. The Ceylon Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act, No.48 of 1949, deprived non-citizens of their right to vote, thereby effectively disenfranchising the whole community of Tamil plantation workers. These people had exercised their franchise in 1931, 1936 and in 1947, and had elected eight Tamil members to Parliament. Elsewhere their vote was decisive in electing LSSP and CP members, all Sinhalese, to Parliament. (See tables iv. & v. p.193).
- 17. Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi, Silver Jubilee Volume, Jaffna, 1974, Resolutions passed at the First National Convention, Trincomalee, 1951, Section 4, pp.7–10.
- 18. A. Amirthalingam succeeded Chelvanayagam as leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front. He was leader of the Opposition in the Sri Lankan Parliament from 1977 until 1983, when the TULF MPs vacated their seats after refusing to take the oath requiring allegiance to a unitary State.
- 19. The Federal Party and its successor the TULF retained the seat for the much disputed Trincomalee at every subsequent parliamentary election and gained control of the Trincomalee District Development Council elected in 1981.
- 20. Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC): Main organisation of the Tamil plantation workers (often referred to as of Indian origin) deprived of their Citizenship rights in 1948.
- 21. Democratic Workers' Congress (DWC): Smaller and less powerful organisation of Tamil plantation workers.
- 22. Samir Amin, Class and Nation: Historically and in the Current Crisis, Monthly Review Press, 1980, p.175.

23. Traditional milk rice breakfast among the Sinhalese. Bandaranaike was adept in giving wide publicity to such acts thereby contrasting the lifestyle of his party members with that of Sir John Kotelawala, the previous prime minister, and other UNP leaders.
24. F.R. Jayasuriya, University Lecturer in Economics, and one of the more extremist advocates of "Sinhala only" speaking at a seminar in the University of Ceylon in 1955, explaining his definition of "Sinhala only" said, all Tamil people in the country, even in northern-most Jaffna, should one day speak and be administered in Sinhalese.
25. The B-C Pact as it came to be known, was a timely and appropriate compromise. It could have laid the foundations for a peaceful solution to the problem. It provided for regional councils with a fair degree of autonomy acceptable to the Tamils and made possible the amalgamation of the Northern and Eastern Provinces under one council. Colonisation schemes came within the jurisdiction of the regional councils and thereby guaranteed that residents of the district will be given first preference. Tamil was recognised as the language of a national minority and was to be the language of administration in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. This Pact became the model when every subsequent attempt was made to arrive at a compromise within the framework of a unitary constitution.
26. Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement: Signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene on 29 July 1987. The Agreement provided for the cessation of hostilities and a certain degree of regional autonomy. Initially accepted by all the Tamil groups though the LTTE did so under pressure from India.
27. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Verso, London, 1983, pp. 132 and 140.
28. The 1965 general elections resulted with no party having an absolute majority, the kind of result that the FP looked forward to. Both, the UNP and the SLFP-LSSP coalition sought an alliance with the FP. The FP preferred a coalition with the UNP. The Dudley Senanayake - Chelvanayagam Pact was an attempt to revive the B-C Pact which the UNP had opposed in 1957. The coalition lasted until 1968. The SLFP now found that it was in its interest to oppose the Dudley-Chelva Pact.
29. Bandaranaike's initial programme in 1956 provided for the 'reasonable use of Tamil'. Following the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1958, the Bandaranaike government finally enacted the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act No.28 of 1958. The provisions were ineffective until regulations were framed. In 1966, the UNP government enacted the required regulations which, however, were not implemented.
30. Tamil restaurants served *thosai* and *vadai*, relished by Sinhalese and Tamils alike. At times of conflict and tension these restaurants and boutiques were the first victims of arson. In using such symbols in their attempt to topple the UNP government, the LSSP and CP were inadvertently fueling the forces of Sinhala chauvinism.
31. Republican Constitution: Enacted in 1972 made the country a Republic. From 1947 to 1972 Ceylon remained a constitutional monarchy under the British Crown. The country's name was changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka.
32. In 1981, Mrs. Bandaranaike was given a massive public reception in Jaffna, the like of which no Sinhalese leader has received in recent years. She was visiting Jaffna as a private citizen after she was deprived of her civic rights. In spite of the atrocities her government had committed against the Tamils, the TULF had the generosity to champion her civic rights and in addition offered her a welcome in Jaffna. Mrs. Bandaranaike responded by saying that she was deeply moved and honoured. She publicly recalled her previous visit as PM under heavy armed escort.
33. V. Ponnambalam later formed the 'Sentamilar Iyakkam' or Red Tamils Movement in 1978. It was an attempt made by the Tamil members and sympathisers of the left movement to regroup. Sections of the TULF welcomed this move. But when the movement finally sought membership within the front, the right-wing within the TULF sabotaged the move.
34. A. Amirthalingam, M.P. Sri Lanka's Leader of the Opposition Analyses the New Constitution, (Text of Speech delivered in the National State Assembly on 3rd August, 1978), Colombo, pp.10 & 11.

35. At this juncture in Tamil politics it became fashionable to throw in a little bit of Lenin and Gandhi into the rhetoric. In the course of time Mao's dictum that 'power grows out of the barrel of a gun' became popular. The end result was a little bit of Polpotism.
36. The Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality documented the violations of human rights in the Northern Province. MIRJE publications include 1) Emergency 1979. 2) Jaffna Days of Terror, 1981. 3) Torture and Tension in Vavuniya, 1982.
37. It is noteworthy that discrimination and oppression of the Tamils became internationalised only after extensive violence by the security forces. Thirty years of peaceful and democratic protest, including satyagraha and civil disobedience, did not catch the attention either of the world's news media or human rights organisations. The armed struggle did. Violence was newsworthy, peaceful resistance was not. In 1981, it took six weeks for the first foreign journalist who covered the burning of the public library to arrive in Jaffna. He was Francis Wheen from London. Thereafter the world's leading newspapers and periodicals have effectively covered the issue.
38. See chapter by Kumar David for a discussion on the several Tamil groups that have resorted to armed struggle.
39. JVP: Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or the Peoples' Liberation Front, the Sinhalese group that attempted an insurrection that failed in 1971. Unjustly and falsely accused of anti-Tamil violence in 1983, was banned by Jayewardene's UNP government. Went underground and has become a powerful Sinhalese force opposing the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987.
40. This was in the Faculty of Arts in which Sinhalese students constituted over 85 per cent.
41. RCL: Revolutionary Communist League – small Trotskyite group composed of one of the factions that broke away from the LSSP. Has taken a strong stand in favour of self-determination for the Tamils; publishing a weekly paper in Tamil as well as in Sinhalese since 1978.
42. CMU: The Ceylon Mercantile Union – well-known trade union under the leadership of veteran trade unionist Bala Tampoe who quit the LSSP in 1964.
43. These were the Nava Sama Samaja Party, the Revolutionary Communist League and the Ceylon Mercantile Union. The Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (Peoples' Liberation Front) led the 1971 insurrection. In the late seventies a publication on behalf of the JVP appeared recognising the right to self-determination of the Tamils. Today, it has taken a Sinhala chauvinist position and has rejected the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement.
44. Prevention of Terrorism Act: Was enacted in 1979 and was followed by grave violations of human rights including prolonged detention, torture and disappearances of Tamil youth. Amnesty International and other human rights organisations have called for a withdrawal of this Act.
45. Referendum 1982: Jayewardene's UNP government held this referendum in order to extend the life of Parliament. The Parliament elected in 1977 for six years thus became the infamous 'long Parliament' without general elections for eleven years.
46. W.A. Wiswa Warnapala and L. Hewagama Dias, Recent Politics in Sri Lanka: The Presidential Election and the Referendum of 1982, Navrang, New Delhi, 1983.
47. V. Karalasingham, The Way Out for the Tamil Speaking People (Including Postscript: 1977), Colombo 1978, pp. 46 & 57.
48. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp.32 & 33.
49. Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, Dynamics of Global Crisis, The Macmillan Press, London, 1982. See "Crisis of Ideology and Ideology of Crisis," by Frank, pp.153, 155, 158, 164 & 165.
 "The crisis of which we are speaking is the crisis of the demise of the capitalist world economy ... the crisis will no doubt continue through the twenty-first century. It seems to be a crisis of transition from a capitalist world-economy to a socialist world order." Immanuel Wallerstein, p.11.
50. *ibid.*, See "Crisis, Nationalism and Socialism," by Amin pp. 170, 210 & 228.
51. *ibid.*, See "Crisis as Transition," by Wallerstein, pp. 34 & 36.
52. *ibid.*, See, "Conclusion: A Friendly Debate," pp.238 & 239.

12

Roots and results of racism in Sri Lanka

Kumar David

An introductory 'postscript'

The 29 July 1987 Accord between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene, the developments preceding it and the events since then, mark a fundamental turn in the class, ethnic and political conjuncture in Sri Lanka. We are witnessing perhaps the most important shift that has taken place in Sri Lankan history since colonial times. Therefore this introduction, though written as a postscript in January 1988, about a year after the bulk of this chapter was drafted, demands to be placed at its head.

Let us summarise the essential elements of this transformation straight away. There are three vital points:

1. Sri Lanka has become, and will remain, more closely enmeshed with India than it has ever been since the beginning of colonial times, some four-and-a-half centuries ago.
2. The class alliance between the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois Sinhala chauvinism, the very basis of State power for the last three decades, has been ruptured.
3. The politics of the Tamil militant movements has been transformed and the Eelam cry has been snuffed out.

It is argued in the body of this chapter that since Sri Lanka's ruling classes were effete in that they were incapable of achieving economic dynamism or ideological hegemony, they were forced into an alliance with newly rising petty-bourgeois classes in order to hold on to State power. It is further argued that in order to consolidate this alliance, and additionally, to disrupt a potential alliance between radical petty-bourgeois

currents and the left movement, Sinhala chauvinism became the ideological centrepiece of politics. The petty-bourgeois movement, like its counterparts in other countries, internalised a strong chauvinist current. The bourgeoisie, when it entered into this class alliance in the 1950s, embraced this strand and threaded its emotions into the hegemonic national ideology of post-independence Sri Lanka. This is where the Gordian knot was tied and it took an ethnic civil war and the might of the Indian State to cut it.

This three decade alliance has now indeed been ruptured. The sophisticated big bourgeoisie led by J.R. Jayewardene has decided to risk a major split with Sinhala chauvinism, a split in the very foundations of the political underpinning of the State. It had no other choice — why not?

Firstly, the cost of the alliance was too high in terms of the ethnic civil war. Over three decades the political conjuncture in Sri Lanka had become overdetermined by the ethnic. That is to say politics, economics, class relations and every other aspect of national life were shot through by ethnic determinations. Contradictions and crisis in every aspect of national life exploded in some ethnic manifestation or another. The culmination of this process was an ethnic civil war. By 1985, it was clear that the war was militarily unwinnable, so long as the Tamil militants had Indian support, and it took till 1987 for the State to break with Sinhala chauvinism, the necessary precondition for ending the war.

Secondly, the cost of the alliance with Sinhala chauvinism was too high in that the civil war had developed into a regional imbroglio which had drawn in India. We will not here summarise the stages of Indian involvement and its accelerating pace in 1987, nor discuss the political and strategic calculations in Delhi or the 'Tamil Nadu factor', since a study of the Indian side is a major topic in itself. Suffice it to say that India was now deeply involved and it was clear to Sri Lanka's ruling classes that a settlement to the Tamil question to be feasible also had to be a settlement which would be acceptable to India. A permanent linkage had been created.

Difficulties arising from the lack of Western, especially US support, mounting pressure from international lending agencies (Sri Lanka is under a mountain of debt), and the difficulty of containing mass protest by purely authoritarian measures and postponing elections, were additional though secondary considerations.

The big bourgeoisie under Jayewardene, however, still needed to lean heavily on the Indian State so as to find the courage to break its three decade alliance with Sinhala chauvinism. Sinhala chauvinism, outraged and betrayed, took to the streets, rioting and burning State property, but the presence of the Indian army, albeit in the North and east, functioned as a guarantee that an army coup or Cabinet walkout led by Prime Minister Premadasa, did not overthrow the Jayewardene regime.

Sinhala chauvinism has certainly not yet been defeated as an ideology or a political force. Under the JVP it is emerging as a conspiratorial semi-fascist movement of daily terrorism. Its other face is Mrs. Bandaranaike's racist platform (standard fare for both, the SLFP and UNP), of crass opportunism aimed at the next elections.

The outcome is still not definitive. Certainly, it is the Jayewardene regime that now feels isolated as the flames of racism are fanned by anti-Indian and anti-Tamil rabble rousing. However, what is absolutely crucial is that Mrs. Bandaranaike knows very well that if she comes to power she too will have to function under the new and irreversible relations of hegemony established with the Indian State. Since the bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka, whether under the UNP or the SLFP, has no intention of going to war with the Indian State, even if there is a change of government, at an election the new government will be tied to the terms of the Accord in whatever face-saving way the adaptation is done. Hence, whatever short-term (and short-sighted!), tactical alliances are made, on a longer time scale the split between the Sri Lanka bourgeoisie and Sinhala chauvinism will widen. The former will move steadily into the orbit of the Indian State – and incidentally this has little to do, in the long run, with the timetable of troop withdrawals and more to do with trade, investment and capital movement. In the meantime Sinhala chauvinism will develop increasingly into various semi-fascist movements and not unnaturally some manifestations will exhibit left and pseudo-Marxist colorations.

On the Tamil side too, political transformations have been traumatic. The Eelam cry, as explained in the body of this chapter, was always something of a cry in the wilderness. A hard core of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) will indeed continue to hang on to it, but so far as the Tamil people are concerned it is a *non sequiter*. The Tamil nationalist fanaticism of the LTTE ensures that a core element which cannot abandon the Eelam concept will continue to function as a guerilla movement. However, it is clear that the leadership seriously miscalculated the Indian response to its last ditch effort to disrupt the Rajiv-JR Accord. This blunder cost the LTTE dearly, resulting in the destruction of its military power and the debunking of its pretensions of political leadership. A political split between those who will and those who won't ultimately do a political deal with India is very likely. As for the other Tamil groups, they have all come to terms with the Accord and have now openly abandoned Eelam.

But for the brutality and human rights violations that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) so wantonly inflicted on the people of Jaffna in its campaign to take the city from the Tigers, the isolation of the LTTE from the Tamil people would have been *a fait accompli*. The IPKF, however, behaved and behaves and is perceived by the Tamil people as a brutal and alien force. For this reason, more than any other therefore, there is still room for the LTTE to slowly swing increasing sections of the Tamil people away from a constitutional settlement carrying an Indian guarantee.

The most depressing aspect of the emerging situation is the predicament of the Sri Lanka left movement – potentially the only force that could have provided a way out of the mire. The Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) is now the leading edge of radical Sinhala chauvinism and mindless terrorism, its principal weapon. Reggie Siriwardena, I am told, now conceptualises the JVP as a Pol Potian trend. In strictly scientific terms, the analogy is not accurate, but it evokes entirely justified images of barbarism.

The NSSP on the other hand is quite out of its theoretical depth as the pace and complexity of events far outstrips its ability to come to terms with reality. Unable to break out of an ideological cocoon which totally misrepresents the relative impact of ethnic and class politics, the leaders even mounted Mrs. Bandaranaike's platform with little understanding of what they are doing there. In order to remain on that platform the NSSP had for a period to remain silent on that one demand that would signal an irreconcilable break with Sinhala chauvinism: "Implement the Accord; establish the regional administration of the linked Northern and Eastern Provinces."

The parties of the old left, the CP and the LSSP and the SLMP have indeed demanded the speedy implementation of the Accord. In so doing they have placed themselves squarely in opposition to racist and emerging semi-fascist trends. However, the parties of the old left are historically too compromised to offer by themselves a real political alternative. Hence, their opposition is seen as mere social democracy and their anti-racism is construed as a pro-government apology. It is not only their tragedy but ours as well that nemesis strikes with such vengeance.

Transnationalism, however, is not a privilege of the propertied classes and of capital alone. As the future of Sri Lanka becomes ever more deeply enmeshed with India, the democratic and progressive movement in Sri Lanka will evolve a deeper nexus with that vast sub-continental cauldron of pre-revolutionary humanity. There is a growing realisation of this on the island, but the same cannot be said of India's numerous political and peoples' democratic organisations. They have still to come to an adequate realisation that Sri Lanka is as much a charge on their agenda as is Punjab or the rights of oppressed castes. History is irreversible; the nexus between India and Sri Lanka has come to stay, we must wake up and think in new categories and undertake new responsibilities.

Early phases of ethnic contradiction

The current conjuncture of Sri Lankan history is the confluence of three histories: The Sinhala-Tamil, the economic, and that of the Tamil militants. The first is the history of ethnic relations situated in the context of class, State and party politics from pre-independence times to the early 1980s. The relationships of the hegemonic to the residual modes of production at independence, the phases and failures of the subsequent alternative strategies of economic development (attempts to stabilise capitalism), and their influence on sectional bourgeois and petty-bourgeois interests and on the Tamil minority underpin this history. The political and economic programme initiated in the late 1970s, has been the midwife to a new phase in the national question, the root of the civil war and the hopeless crisis of authoritarian bonapartism.

All previous writing on Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict has revealed an obvious unfamiliarity with the Tamil liberation movements – something of a play without the prince. This chapter attempts the first systematic historiographic sketch of the origins,

evolution, ideology and class character, relationships to Indian sub-imperialism and the historical potentials of the armed Tamil liberation organisations.¹

The concluding sections look more concretely at the current (late 1986), conjuncture, the prospects of settlement, which of course is not the same thing as a solution, and takes account of the role of the Indian State. The opportunism of the old left parties is a constant and unavoidable referent throughout the chapter. The strengths and weaknesses of the newer Marxist parties and the problems of trans-ethnic revolutionary collaboration that influence the scope for democratic, radical and revolutionary politics in the post- or non-settlement phase also feature here.

An effete bourgeoisie

The material basis of national unity between the Sinhalese and Tamil people at the time of independence in 1948, was relatively weak. It consisted of certain interests of the native bourgeois class and the English speaking professional elite, and the employment opportunities, mainly white collar, that the nation-state made possible for middle class Tamils. Some amount of small trader Tamil capital was also visible in the Sinhalese areas as Tamil petty traders set up shop in the Western and Central Provinces and some of the other larger towns, but this contributed little to the ideology of nationhood. The vast majority of both the Sinhalese and Tamil rural people were little concerned by all this. The Sinhalese peasantry, both low country and Kandyan, the Tamil farmer and craftsman in the north and east, and the bulk of the fisherfolk functioned on the margin of the capitalist mode of production and the national market. The 'nation' meant little to their material existence; it persisted more in Sinhalese and Buddhist lore and mythology.

The material interests of the bourgeoisie and the elite in nationhood, furthermore, took a particular form. This was the ownership of small and medium plantations (called estates) by big Tamil bourgeois families in fertile Sinhalese areas, ownership of prime Colombo bungalows, small and medium investments in Colombo or up-country based trading, import, transport and other service sector firms, lucrative practices in law, medicine and other professions (again mainly in Colombo and its environs), a vested interest in tertiary education. This range of activities brought the Tamil upper classes to the south and promoted contact, if not association, with their Sinhalese counterparts during the latter part of British colonial rule and the early post-independence years.

The migration of a Sinhalese bourgeoisie, landowners or professionals, into Tamil areas was practically nil. The two reasons for this were the resource poor nature of the Tamil areas and the geographical co-ordinates that the plantation economy of British colonialism stamped on the patterns of regional development. Cultivable land, the primary resource in the absence of mineral or other forms of natural wealth, was in acute and absolute shortage in the Jaffna peninsula; in the rest of the Northern and

Eastern Provinces (the traditional Tamil homelands in the dry zone), only multi-million rupee irrigation schemes could have rendered the land fertile.

The same migratory pattern was seen in the white collar salaried Tamil middle class. Educated largely in Jaffna schools founded by Christian missionaries, or on similar lines by non-Christians, they trekked down from the arid north for State employment or employment in private firms that had risen as an ancillary to, or in the aftermath of, the plantation economy. Favouritism of Tamils in employment recruitment by the colonial administration encouraged the flow. Here too, there was no counter flow of a Sinhalese middle class to Tamil areas.

One of the ideological features of this migratory pattern was that ethnic rivalry and suspicion always divided the bourgeoisie, the elite and the middle classes from the earliest times, right up to independence and beyond. Hence, while common class interests forged some weak links between the Sinhalese and Tamil propertied classes, as well as the urban middle class, relationships remained bedevilled by rivalry and contributed to the inability of the bourgeoisie to integrate as a class or establish its hegemony.

More deeply, however, the failure of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie to establish its hegemony over the nation issued from its real weakness as a class. A weakness to be measured by its minuscule development of productive forces and by its eclipse by the left and the working class in the independence movement.

The bourgeoisie, unlike in India, had developed virtually no industry by the time of independence. A pitiable comprador class, estate agents, import-export traders, vendors or retainers, this class even had to choose its political stars like D.B. Jayatilleke and D.S. Senanayake from the landed gentry. The landowning sections of this class too never developed a strong agricultural capitalism, their smaller rubber and coconut holdings, always dwarfed by the commanding heights of British imperialism's mighty tea plantations. The low country Sinhalese and Kandyan landed gentry, whose sons or daughters often stood at the helm of the Ceylon National Congress, the Sinhala Maha Sabha and later the UNP and the SLFP,² was actually a decrepit feudal remnant. The choice of these persons was itself a measure of the debility of capitalism as an industrial or agricultural productive force.

Mass involvement in the independence struggle against the British Raj remained firmly under the leadership of the left, especially the undivided Samasamaja movement of the earlier period. There was nothing remotely comparable to the ideological hegemony and leadership of Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Patel, Bose and the Congress and the League. In India, the bourgeoisie and the modernised elite, with Gandhi, who had won over the petty bourgeois and peasant masses, towered over the Indian left. In Sri Lanka, the bourgeoisie cringed in the corridors, carried petitions to Whitehall adorned in evening suits and white bow ties and slunk in fear of a strident left movement which proclaimed nationalism with socialism and independence with revolution. The heroes of the struggle were N.M. Perera, Phillip Gunawardene and Colvin R. de Silva. At independence, therefore, Britain handed over the administration of the State to an

alliance of the bourgeoisie, the landed gentry and the elite (essentially a bourgeois ruling class), which was intimidated from the very moment of its birth. Even its narrowest of parliamentary margins in 1947 had to be secured by a delimitation device which gave as much importance to remote and unpopulated land tracts as to urban humanity, and it had to resort to the appointment of a certain number of MPs. The further emasculation of this effete bourgeoisie was interwoven with ethnic divisiveness and the following sections look at how the bankrupt bourgeoisie failed to unify the nation.

The plantation workers

Even before independence, the wave of plantation workers' public servants' and general strikes of 1945 to 1948, had signalled the militancy of the working class and confirmed the fear of the 'red menace' in the perceptions of the ruling classes. The fact that in the first general elections of 1947, the plantation electorates returned to Parliament candidates of their own Tamil community, and that in other areas with a sizeable plantation Tamil vote, this community voted *en bloc* for Samasamajist and Communist candidates, finally convinced the D.S. Senanayake UNP government that it had to kill two birds with one stone by confronting the 'Marxist devil' and slaying the legendary 'Tamil enemy'. There followed the two Citizenship Acts and the Parliamentary Elections Act of 1948-49³ which disenfranchised this community and rendered it stateless.

The plantation, or up-country Tamils, constitute a distinct community, separate from the so-called Ceylon Tamils who have populated the north and east for millenia. They are an agricultural proletariat, descendents of indentured labourers brought from south India to work initially on coffee and later tea plantations since the 1820s. They have preserved their customs, their distinctive manner of Tamil speech and their cultural, political (organisational) and community identity. For one-and-a-half centuries, furthermore, their labour has created the wealth of the modern capitalist sector of the nation. They live in semi-bonded conditions on plantations surrounded by Kandyan Sinhalese villages. Except in the Nuwara Eliya district where, together with a small number of Ceylon Tamils, they constitute 60 per cent of the population, they are a minority in all hill country districts. To run ahead of the chronology of this exposition for a moment, their material circumstance, their class interests and their separate identity is such that the Tamil Eelam cry evokes no response from the plantations.

By isolating the plantation workers by the manipulation of race prejudice and by striking a double blow at class unity and broad democratic rights, the political leadership in the UNP for the first time fully consciously and voluntarily exploited racial divisions to stabilise the regime. Hereafter, the bourgeoisie would again and again be pressed into deals and compromises with Sinhala chauvinism under pressure of events or of rising social tensions, but this time round it was a free, voluntary and fully conscious piece of statecraft.

1956 and after

The 1953 *hartal* (strike) which shook the State and, remotely at least, showed that State power had become an issue, marks the high point of working class mobilisation in the post-independence phase. However, the *hartal* was actually less than pre-revolutionary and proved to be an episode, not the first step, in rising waves of struggle. The reason for this lay in profoundly important developments which were maturing in Sinhalese rural society, which would burst forth in the dramatic 1956 general elections.

A new rural intelligentsia, a radicalised petty bourgeoisie, had matured in the Sinhalese village and was to appear on the stage in 1956 as a central actor. This was not the radical Jacobin, Marxist or Maoist, often youthful, petty bourgeois current that surfaced more than a decade later in many parts of the world, Sri Lanka included. The 1956 movement was symbolised by a more indigenous current, by the village school teacher, the Buddhist monk, the native physician and the prospering trader (*mudalali* or moneyed-man). The driving slogans of this resurgence were Sinhala-Buddhist culture, the vernacular against the privileges of the English educated elite, employment opportunities in the State sector — in short a place in the sun for an important, emerging class. A confident and fresh intelligentsia that carried the village and the peasantry behind it, this movement stood, politically, four square behind S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's SLFP.

The process that was unfolding through 1956, had matured for over a decade in the womb of the village. It grew out of high literacy (over 70 per cent), thanks to universal free education, stable universal suffrage since 1931, steady improvement in standards of living (due to welfare won by powerful working class actions, the Korean War boom in rubber prices, the frittering away of reserves and the impoverishment of plantation workers) and the radical rhetoric of left politics which good communications carried into the remotest village. The year 1956 was indeed a new morn, and for a moment the old bourgeoisie and privileged elite did wonder if all was lost.

A Sinhala-Buddhist renaissance, almost by definition, had to have an anti-Tamil content to it. Divisiveness is certainly an attribute of all petty-bourgeois ideological revivalisms and specifically in Sri Lanka, in the context of the migratory pattern of the Tamil upper and middle classes previously described, the renewed demand of the Sinhala educated intelligentsia for State employment, jealousies in the learned (sic!) professions and rivalries among traders were the elements that gave the cultural revival its racist edge. This was encapsulated in the 'Sinhala Only' slogan, where the 'Sinhala' had a progressive content to it as an expression of opposition to the privileges, powers and customs of the English speaking elite, but the 'Only' unmistakably denoted the exclusion of the Tamil clerk, shopkeeper and professional competitor.

Two currents were then intertwined in the 1956 movement — radical populism and Sinhala chauvinism. The bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka could retain State power only by making concessions to radical populism and more fundamentally by entering into

an enduring alliance with Sinhala chauvinism. This lies at the root of all subsequent ethnopolitics.

The alliance between the bourgeois State power and Sinhala chauvinism manifests itself at several cardinal nodes of the political system and its changing forms. Every government since 1956, has carried in its innermost circles of power, a powerful Sinhala chauvinist faction — C.P. de Silva, N.Q. Dias, K.M.P. Rajaratna, J.R. Jayewardene, K.G.B. Kalugalle, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake, to name but a few. This balancing of countervailing tendencies alone permitted the bourgeoisie to retain State power.

Secondly, every agreement reached between the Tamil politicians and the government of the day, beginning with the 1957 B-C Pact,⁴ was abrogated by the government because it succumbed to the pressures of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism. Paradoxically perhaps, but as further proof of this thesis, when out of office, the leadership of both bourgeois parties, especially J.R. Jayewardene and Sirima Bandaranaike, have campaigned on a crass racist card from J.R.'s infamous 1958 march to Kandy, to Sirima's efforts to abort any possibility of a J.R.-Amirthalingam Accord.

Finally, the long history of discrimination in respect of language rights, employment, education, the courts, transacting business with the State and so on, which present day recriminatory Tamil politics has copiously placed on record and the unceasing brutalisation of the Tamil people by the armed forces and the police and the parallel process of systematic racialisation of these organs of State, cannot be called a mere rising pitch of ethno-confrontationism. Rather, this is part of a wider process of power politics, sometimes conscious, sometimes responding to an inner logic of its own, motivated by the need to manipulate the petty-bourgeois electorate, to consolidate the power base of the State in a specific manner. Though the remark is obviously speculative, it is doubtful if a bourgeois State could have been consolidated in Sri Lanka on any other basis.

The alliance between the bourgeoisie, its State and Sinhala chauvinism, was something far more than, though including, spoken alliances between parties and power groups. That ethno-politics is the overdetermined focus of the confluence of several histories — the State, the economy and the manifestly Sinhala-Tamil — is a theme which will grow stronger as this chapter proceeds; the categorical imperative, as it were, which this alliance constitutes for the survival of the bourgeois State and its class rule mediates the central structural elements of State power.

The catalogue of events which led to the total alienation of the Tamils has been much publicised and well documented.⁵ The catalogue includes communal carnage in a series of riots in which the party in power sometimes connived in, the burning of libraries, the razing of villages, torture, indiscriminate killing and the fulfilment of the pathological urges of the racist 'army of occupation'. Genocide, in the strict sense of the word, as has been seen elsewhere, has not really been resorted to, or not yet, but the Sri Lankan State has certainly long ago lost the moral right to govern.

The final casualty of populism and petty-bourgeois radicalism was the Samasamajist and Communist tradition. The close overlap of the working class with the village, especially in the case of the semi-rural proletariat of Sabaragamuwa, Kalutara district and the Southern Province accelerated the process, and the opportunism of an ageing leadership ensured the sell-out. In 1964, the LSSP, and soon afterwards, the CP, decided to form a coalition with Mrs Bandaranaike's government. The coalition was turned out of office in 1965, to return with a spectacular two-thirds majority in the 1970 elections, but by 1975 and 1976, the once proud Samasamajist and Communist parties were unceremoniously kicked out of government, reduced to shadows of their former selves, and have since languished as political irrelevancies.

The effect of this on the evolution of the armed Tamil liberation movements will be taken up later. For now we must take note only that the left parties, the LSSP and the CP, during their term of coalition office, became collaborators in all the anti-Tamil discrimination and military/police excesses of Mrs Bandaranaike's government. The so-called 'standardisation' in University admissions, the chit system of granting employment to favourites of ministers and MPs which effectively excluded the bulk of the Tamils and many competent Sinhalese, the way in which the 1971 insurrection was put down, emergency rule and its abuse in Tamil areas, the deaths at the 1974 International Tamil Conference and the heights of nepotism and corruption of coalition government, were all, in the people's eyes, something that the left partners of coalition politics fully shared in.

The economy

It is necessary to summarise briefly some points that are of direct relevance to the substance of this chapter. The post-independence phases of the Sri Lankan economy can be clearly divided into three. 1948 to 1956 was a simple enough comprador period during which the local elite were merely the parvenues of British imperialism. From 1956 to the mid-1970s a national bourgeois class developed behind tariff barriers, State protectionism and credit, selective nationalisation, a more diversified foreign policy and a commensurately diversified aid programme and a conscious thrust towards industrialisation. The present phase is the open economy, so dear to the heart of the IMF – free import-export, currency devaluation, the myth of private foreign investment, tourism and a staggering foreign debt.

The plantation economy and the modern sector, centred mainly around Colombo, dominated the economy at independence – a dominant capitalist mode of production. What survived at the periphery were not pre-capitalist forms but non-capitalist or post-traditional forms which had already been decisively affected, if not actually formed, by the dominant mode. Of the pre-capitalist (feudal) forms only a few remnants of sharecropping and tenant-farming and some social customs survived. What actually existed on a larger scale was peasant subsistence agriculture and landless peasant labour in much of the Sinhalese and Tamil rural areas. In the Central and Uva

Provinces this economy was trapped in the interstices of the tea plantations. Economically separated from the tea plantations to which they did not even supply labour, cramped by landlessness as the population grew and frozen into poverty, the Kandyan Sinhalese village was also separated from the Tamil coolie line on the plantation by language, custom and draconian laws of trespass.

In addition, a semi-proletarian, village-living agricultural labour characterised Sabaragamuwa and parts of the Western and Southern Provinces. Sabaragamuwa is rubber country while the other two Provinces grow coconut as well as some tea and rubber – rice being an ubiquitous village crop. This population, which worked part time or seasonally on rubber, small tea or coconut estates, was quickly penetrated by the left movement and became one of the early semi-rural strongholds of left politics in the 1930s.

Land colonisation (engineering irrigation headworks and canals, clearing new land and settling a new type of cultivator) since the 1930s, established a new type of stunted proto-capitalism. Peasant land hunger and landlessness was a political constraint that forbade large scale alienation of State lands to big landlords or the starting of large scale capitalist farming after independence.

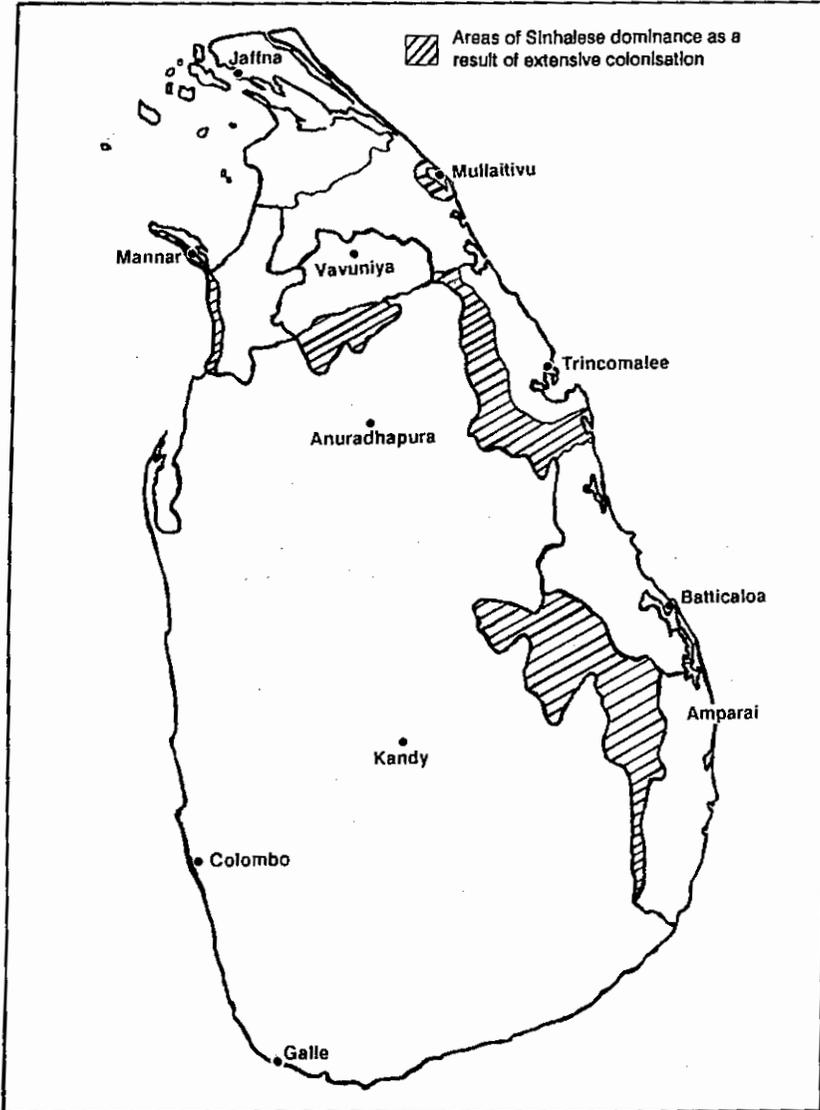
Hence, the great tracts opened up by colonisation were broken into small holdings with restrictions on further alienation, fragmentation or integration. A large proportion of production was marketed. Because of the higher level of agricultural technology, most inputs came from outside as well. Unlike the subsistence sector, this sector was more thoroughly integrated into the national market. These circumstances destined this sector of the economy to the status of a permanent proto-capitalist ancillary.

The citadel of the capitalist mode, the British owned plantations, were in turn flawed in the classicalism of their form by the semi-bonded nature of the labour force and the fact of being foreign owned. A deformed capitalist mode, therefore dominated crisis ridden subsistence peasant farming, post-traditional dependent sectors and vast proto-capitalist land development projects; all of the latter, in one way or another, its own creations. All in all quite a bastardisation of modes of production!

Land colonisation

The pressures of the landless peasantry was something that the first (1948) UNP government, or any other government, could not ignore. Its answer evoked once again the principles of anti-Marxism and communalism. The first of the country's major colonisation programmes, the Gal Oya scheme in the Amparai district, sought to achieve several objectives. They were; augmenting rice production, relieving land hunger in the Sinhalese peasantry, changing the ethnic demography of a Tamil majority area and establishing a class of five-acre farmers, a sort of modern Kulak, as a bulwark against communism.

Sri Lanka: Effects of colonisation



The different objectives met with varying degrees of success, but the ethnic one became a matter of sharp contention as more and more land in the Eastern, North Central and Northern Provinces came under colonisation schemes in the next three decades and the settlement of large Sinhalese populations began to affect the ethnic ratios of regional populations. The Mahaveli irrigation and power programme now

under way⁶ is the most grandiose of all these schemes and the nation's most expensive and potentially most important resource development. The accompanying map shows how development straddles the Sinhalese and Tamil regions. The map shows patterns of settlement since independence under other schemes as well as those proposed under Mahaveli. The North Central, Eastern and Northern Provinces, where most of the island's unused land lies, are central to the scheme.

Of the 625,000 acres of new land to be ultimately opened up with Mahaveli waters (UNDP Master Plan), more than half lie in the mainly Tamil Eastern and Northern Provinces. If the ethnic ratio of these Provinces is to be strictly preserved, land allocation to Sinhalese cultivators in the Mahaveli scheme as a whole will have to be well below the 74 per cent mark – the proportion of Sinhalese in the island's population – even more so if past Tamil grievances are also to be redressed. On the other hand, to retard development in these Provinces, while pushing ahead with North, Central and Uva development will introduce sizeable economic irrationality and only aggravate the other Tamil complaint of neglect of their homelands.

The ethnic composition of the Trincomalee and Amparai districts of the Eastern Province has already been substantially altered. The Sinhalese component has risen from less than 5 per cent in the 1920s to 33 per cent and 38 per cent respectively at the 1981 census. Certainly, the Tamil contention of State-sponsored colonisation aiming to take over their traditional homelands is easily verified, but the new ethnography itself creates problems for anyone serious about secession. The Eastern Province, furthermore, contains a substantial Muslim population (33 per cent).

These issues, to which the Tamil militants have given little thought, as well as the economic irrationality of secession of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, an irrationality highlighted in the previous paragraphs in terms of the utilisation of just one national resource, albeit the most important, the Mahaveli river, as much underlie the schizophrenia in some sections of the militant movement about the Eelam demand, as do the tensions and realities of current politics. More on this later.

Populism

The radical petty-bourgeois tidal wave of 1956, brought a new force to the fulcrum of the political power balance, but it did not overthrow the State power. Its economic programme was essentially populist. Within two years of the expulsion of Philip Gunawardene from the government, the new adjustments between evolving class interests were finalised.

Import substitution industrialisation behind tariff barriers, credit facilities, State participation and essential nationalisations are one way of achieving capital accumulation, through the consolidation of a national bourgeoisie. While this class enriches itself, the subaltern social classes pay the price in various ways.

This populist economics preferentially developed Sinhala national capitalism and the Sinhalese *mudalali*. Newton Gunasinghe has noted this perceptively enough in

a short piece⁷ which discusses the consequences of 'Sinhala only', import-export licensing, currency controls and political favouritism on ethno-politics. State patronage, given the ethnic basis both of populist parliamentary power and of the tensions within the State and corporation bureaucracy, resulted in ethnically differentiated economic benefits for entrepreneurs and merchants. The Sinhalese *mudalali* grew and consolidated into an important class, while the Tamil who did well before the mid-1970s was the exception. In the context of the politically explosive events that the bourgeois-chauvinist alliance in any case implied for Tamils of all social classes, this economic differential finally fractured the bourgeoisie and professional elites sharply along racial lines.

The differential development of the hegemony of social classes among the Sinhalese and Tamil people who have not migrated abroad is in part derived from this ethnic differential in the development of the entrepreneurial and merchant classes. While a stronger basis for capitalist hegemony has developed among the Sinhalese the political leadership among the Tamils ossified in traditionalism, until unbearable social contradictions ended it in an explosion of radical youth politics.

After populism

To return to a broader national, rather than a specifically ethnic theme, in two decades, within the relatively small confines of island Sri Lanka, the maturing of the national bourgeoisie had come a long way, enough to obliterate the division of the ruling class into comprador and national constituents. The outward appurtenances of the distinction disappeared as the children of the *nouveau riche* went to the right schools, adorned Western dress, spruced up their English diction and took to frequenting the right night spots. As their capital swelled, the new bourgeoisie entered into joint ventures with the old, sat on common boards as directors and slowly the industrial, commercial and financial distinctions between the nature of their holdings disappeared. Finally, marriage united their sons and daughters in the close embrace of one great family.

Actually, the turn away from a semi-closed economy towards a free market, open door policy and a pro-Western foreign policy stance started in 1975, in the last years of Mrs Bandaranaike's government. But she was too tarnished to be of any use. Hence, it was a single united bourgeois class that stood solid behind the UNP in the 1977 elections, offered the people the vistas of world capitalism in exchange for ration queues and finished off the old populism in one of the most spectacular election victories. Events, it appeared, had come full circle. But not quite, we will see!

From constitutional to authoritarian bonapartism

The scale of the 1977 mandate gave the UNP the freedom to do as it pleased. Its programme over the next few years, up to the July 1983 riots, was a strategy with

complementary economic and political aspects. The broad features of the economic strategy, on trial in such far flung places as Chile and Sri Lanka, are well known and have attracted much comment. The political, however, in the case of Sri Lanka, was to give rise not to a nation wracked with revolutionary class convulsions as in Chile, but to ethnic civil war.

The new unabashedly foreign-investor directed, private-sector oriented, capitalist growth strategy was something new in a Sri Lanka steeped in welfarism and populism. The success of the new policy was predicated on the curtailment of these concessions and the imposition of tight controls on the labour force; that is on the imposition of severe authoritarian norms. In the first instance, an 80 per cent parliamentary majority appeared to assure a totally legal mode of implementation. A new constitution adopted in 1984, gave Jayewardene immense executive powers, devalued the role of Parliament and provided a mechanism for curbing all forms of opposition.

The opposition parties, especially the SLFP, were manipulated while the smaller left parties, the JVP and the NSSP, were subjected to repression, imprisonment of leaders and banning orders. Mrs Bandaranaike's civil rights were usurped. The so-called national press was reduced to sycophancy.

The political strategy was crafted with an eye on the Lee Kuan Yew model, the intention being to bring all opposition within a narrowly circumscribed constitutional perimeter and to incorporate all the major elements of society under a paternalistic authoritarian umbrella. The exercise has rightly been called an attempt at constitutional bonapartism; it was to be a grand strategy.

The attempt met with a considerable degree of initial success in the south, even before the working class suffered a major setback with the failure of the 1980 general strike, which led to the dismissal of some 100,000 workers, including of course the most militant trade union cadres.

Thondaman, the leader of the CWC, the organisation of the plantation Tamils, sick and tired of the harassment of plantation workers by the 1970-77 coalition government, entered Jayewardene's cabinet. Some concessions were given to the Ceylon Tamils as well, more was promised and an attempt even made to incorporate the main Tamil party, the TULF and its leader Amirthalingam, within the government and the bonapartist umbrella.

Finally, the 1982 referendum blew a hole in the most hallowed of Sri Lanka's political traditions – regular elections – when the term of office of the UNP government, due to expire in 1983, was fraudulently extended for another six years. As is often the case in Third World countries with regimes of crisis, the fragile structure of bourgeois democracy was first subverted by the bourgeois State itself.

Notwithstanding its partial success in other spheres, the grand design of constitutional bonapartism crashed to the ground because it failed to bring to heel the opposition of the Tamil people which had been mounting over the decades and had now begun to take new forms. Things might indeed have been different if Jayewardene

could have sustained a democratic and pluralistic initiative for a period. However, one cannot be a tyrant in the living room and a liberal in the bedroom — not in politics anyway. The Tamils, not only the as yet small militant groups, but also the TULF, held out for a substantial settlement — they could not be pushed into the quickie that Jayewardene wanted. The sustained history of discrimination, repression and broken promises ensured this. Then, Jayewardene's new State knew no other way of dealing with the Tamils than Marcos knew of dealing with Mindanao.

As early as July 1979, Jayewardene met Tamil militancy and intransigence by that method which flowed most naturally from the objectives of his regime and the style of the whole grand strategy; repression. The odious Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was enacted and the army and police let loose on the Tamils.⁸ The order was given to 'stamp out the menace of terrorism,' which of course meant all Tamil opposition. Since then the pitch has risen octave by octave — an inevitability given the pathological racism of the army and police, the strength of Sinhala chauvinism in the inner sanctums of the UNP government and the resulting vicious ethnic polarisation of the majority of Sinhalese and Tamil people.

The legitimacy of the constitutional bonapartist presidency evaporated gradually as the State leaned more and more on repression, not only in the north and east, but in the south as well, and clung to power by subverting the election process. The Jayewardene regime, therefore, came increasingly to be prescribed by repression and authoritarianism.

The transition from constitutional legitimacy to authoritarian repression as the basis of power makes the State immensely vulnerable; *vide* Marcos. The ebb and flow of the currents of Sinhala communalism, in concert with the changing fortunes of the civil war and perceptions of Indian power, sometimes strengthened Jayewardene's hand and sometimes deserted him. For example after July 1983, when the government lost its nerve in the wake of the riots and the danger of Indian military intervention in the aftermath could not be ruled out, Jayewardene's government tottered for months. In the ensuing months, as the military initiative appeared to be passing to the Tamil militants, Sinhala chauvinism ebbed.

The instability of the regime and the limitations of Sinhala chauvinism in propping it up continued right up to mid-1985, that is up to the Thimpu talks following Mrs Gandhi's assassination and the major Indian policy shift under Rajiv.⁹ Since then chauvinism has strengthened and the Sinhalese people by and large have once again hardened in response to the perception that the government has not been beaten after all. This has strengthened the regime temporarily and very superficially in 1986-87. In truth, however, the government in Sri Lanka was weak, and below the surface the structures of support of the State have rotted away; a fact which was only momentarily obscured by an ephemeral tide of chauvinist sentiment among the people at large.

The Tamil 'liberation' movements

It is surprising that despite their importance no serious systematic study of these organisations, their history and their differences has as yet been published. Their

importance can be gauged from the fact that one or another of these organisations is now effectively in control of the Jaffna peninsula and parts of the Eastern Province, the army has been fought to a stalemate in most of the Tamil homeland and the Eelam movement has embroiled India and Sri Lanka in a major tangle. They have posed the issue of the very survival of the island State as a single entity.

Even to politically literate Sinhalese and Indians the distinctions between the LTTE, Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOT) means little – they are all covered by the vague generic ‘Tigers’. Internationally, Marxists, radicals and even journalists are not any better informed. Apart from a few in the Tamil community, only the Sri Lankan and Indian intelligence services seem to have some grasp of the internal realities.

It is not that the Tamil liberation movements are shrouded in secrecy. It is more because at the present stage, a trusted Tamil liberal scholar who may gain sufficient access will, because of his liberalist limitations, lack the analytical tools to properly explore the theoretical terrain, while Tamil Marxists will no doubt plead that they are too busy trying to make history to be able to find the time to record it. The following pages try therefore to make some amends for this situation.

Their pre-history

The renaissance and revival of indigenous Tamil culture, corresponding to the 1956-movement in the south, and the rise of a petty bourgeois movement in the north during the same time period, was very muted. Nothing like the ferment and differentiation that was taking place pre-1956 in the Sinhalese village occurred in the Tamil areas which were comparatively insulated from the socio-economic dynamics at the root of it all. Hence Jaffna society, until it was exploded by the armed youth, continued to be traditionalist, hidebound, dowry hungry and caste ridden – far more backward than the dynamic south.

In any case the petty-bourgeois Sinhala-Buddhism of the 1956 movement caused minority nationalities to assume an apprehensive and defensive posture. Politically this meant that the Tamils consolidated behind the conservative middle class leadership of the Federal Party (FP).

The FP, which in 1976 changed its name to the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), was formed in 1949 under the leadership of S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, an upper middle class Colombo lawyer, as a break away from the Tamil Congress (TC), when the latter remained in partnership with the UNP, despite the disenfranchisement of plantation workers in 1948. When in 1956, the SLFP swept the Sinhalese electorate, the FP did the same in the Tamil areas. Initially its dominant leadership consisted of

Colombo professionals, mainly lawyers, and included as strong a Christian as a Hindu influence. Gradually, this was to change as the centre of gravity of Tamil decision-making shifted from Colombo to Jaffna and was finally personified by Amirthalingam's leadership when Chelvanayagam died.

The FP was conservatively Tamil and politically opposed to such measures as nationalisation, land reform and populist anti-imperialism. The methods of struggle its middle class leadership was capable of were non-violence (*ahimsa*), *satyagraha* and as late as 1972 a pathetic attempt to petition the Queen. Hence, while from 1956 Tamils were beaten and burned in communal riots and while from 1961, the army progressed from belts and whiplash to mass shooting and retributive slaughter, the FP/TULF proved utterly incapable of mounting a challenge, prevailing on the government to reign in these forces or organising the Tamils for their own defence. Gandhian tactics are no panacea for all situations. In any case, for the FP/TULF Gandhism was more a recognition of impotency than a matter of high moral principle.

The militant youth organisations were a reaction to a realisation of the impotency of the TULF and a consequence of the complete lack of faith in the trail of broken promises that littered the history of government-FP/TULF pact making. The early turn to terrorism was a measure of their desperation and of the inability of the left movement, now ensconced in coalition government with Mrs Bandaranaike, to influence them; it was something which would mark their whole future.

The early history

The history of the militant movements from the formative early 1970s onwards is important because their ideological distinctions and practical differences can be traced from here through the vicissitude of events to their future potentialities. A brief historiographic sketch follows.

The use of firearms and the manufacture of small handbombs by petty fireworks makers during inter-caste violence between 1965 and 1970, the influence of the wave of youth politics in the West on the Tamil youth at the Peradeniya University and the disruption of the prospering smuggling trade centred on the small northern port of Valvettithurai (VVT) by firmer navy intervention and an ID card system, all added a particular ferment to the broader political background already described. Then, the crucial issue of 'standardisation' fell like a bombshell on the whole school-going Tamil youth population in 1970.

'Standardisation', briefly, was a method of multiplying marks obtained in the University entrance examinations in the Sinhala and Tamil media by different weightage factors so as to markedly increase the number of Sinhalese students gaining admission. It had its biggest effects on admissions to the prestigious and highly competitive engineering and medical faculties. The Tamils, especially the Jaffna Tamils, are motivated by an exceptionally high degree of educational ambition and this has been the biggest source of social mobility in an otherwise stagnant society.

'Standardisation' sent shock waves through a youth population bristling with social discontent and already disillusioned with the FP.

Two separate currents developed out of this broad background, one based on the student and youth protest movement and the other out of the radicalised VVT smuggling community. Through the mutations and interactions between these parallel currents the five major movements of today evolved – EROS and EPRLF being clearly traceable to mutations of the youth currents in interaction with various Marxist influences, TELO almost a direct descendent of the other current, while the LTTE and PLOT came out of a process of interaction between the two currents.

Student opposition to 'standardisation' first organised itself in 1970, in the Manavar Peravai (Student Federation) under the leadership of Sathiyaseelan, a Peradeniya University student radicalised in the late 1960s, and Muthukumaraswamy. They led a series of demonstrations and were firmly anti-TULF. Although the Manavar Peravai soon fizzled out, it sufficiently affected the mass of Tamil youth that a second and more serious effort at organisation was made when the Illaignar Peravai (Youth Federation) was formed with a much more general political programme including that of a separate Tamil state, Eelam. This movement split into two at the 1974 Murungan Conference on the question of whether to relate to the TUF (Tamil United Front) or not. The majority opposed such a relationship and became the Viduthalai Iyakam (Liberation Organisation) and later TELO. This is quite separate from today's TELO and therefore referred to as old-TELO hereafter. Many of the figures now in EROS and EPRLF such as Varathan, Padmanabha, Sundar and Balakumaran were either key elements within or associated with this movement.

The old-TELO was highly politicised and brought out three issues of their journal *Erimalai*. Side by side with a clear Eelam demand was a whole radical political stance and it was promptly labelled communist and Marxist.

Links had been formed with underworld figures for the purpose of procuring arms and right from 1972 onwards, several acts of political terrorism and robberies were attempted, resulting in Sathiyaseelan's arrest in April 1973. Following the assassination of the pro-government mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiyappah in July 1975, and the failure of the Pulloli Bank robbery a few months later, nearly all of the old-TELO was arrested or forced to flee the country and the organisation itself disappeared. The regrouping of these elements, in various arrangements, marks the origin of some of today's groups; we will return to this later.

The second current developed in 1973-74 around Thangathurai, a moderately well to do businessman closely connected to the smuggling 'trade'. The town of VVT has long been associated with smuggling and its people – of the Karayar or fishing caste – have a reputation of being well to do, proud and brave. Before their evolution as a separate movement Thangathurai, Kuttimani and others were for some years linked with the FP as informal and strong-arm associates.

As its roots imply, this group could never evolve a strong social or political ideology and simply remained committed to the ideas of Eelam and the methods of

terrorism — the Thangathurai and Kuttimani mystique always had something of the Robin Hood about it; spectacular bank robberies and the summary settling of scores being among their specialities. This current which has become today's TELO still shows a clearly eclectic ideology.

Although there was much interaction between these currents in the situation of a fight against the common enemy and the common problems of evading the security forces, nevertheless their different ideological predilections and outlook, often unconscious to the participants themselves, prevented their merging into a unified Tamil liberation movement.

Various underworld groups interacted with these processes; one was linked to a notorious criminal called Chetti. Following a successful jail break in 1974, he crossed over to India, where a number of fighters from VVT were absconding and succeeded in persuading just one of them, a young man called Prabakaran, to return to Jaffna and re-organise. They set up the Tamil New Tigers (TNT), probably with Chetti as its leader. Chetti could not stay out of prison for long and following the elimination of Patrick Stanislaus (Saravan) in an internal power struggle, Prabakaran gradually consolidated his leadership. Prabakaran and those close to him, although from the same VVT community as Thangathurai and Kuttimani, were young students during the Manavar Paravai period and were influenced by and drawn into the student radicalisation of the time. The early Prabakaran group (Inpam, T.R. Bala, Ragavan, etc.), therefore evolved in interaction with the two definitive currents previously described. Furthermore, the TNT, which in 1976 changed its name to LTTE, distinguished itself by developing a strongly militaristic ideology.

Caste and family loyalties were important factors in the early consolidation of the LTTE and in safeguarding the organisation from treachery. Suggestions of any internal dissent or a threat to the organisation's one-man leadership system were taken very seriously and dealt with by severe and summary methods including physical elimination. An ascetic personal code of conduct prevailed for a period and the organisation was also characterised by firm discipline, an impatience with political discourse and a military organisational structure which went along well with Prabakaran's reputation as a fine sharp-shooter.

However, not everything was smooth sailing. The years from July 1979 to July 1983, that is from the PTA to the race riots, were hard and difficult, especially for the LTTE which suffered at the hands of not only the army, but also from Uma Maheswaran's defection to form PLOT. An interesting episode from these hard times is that Prabakaran suddenly walked out of the LTTE sometime in 1979. He joined the Thangathurai-Kuttimani group and participated in the Rs. 8 million Neerveli bank robbery which Kuttimani led, and he is also said to have inspired Kuttimani to shoot Chetti. Quite as suddenly as he left he returned to the LTTE about a year later and was immediately accepted again as its leader. Thangathurai and Kuttimani were arrested and eventually murdered in prison during the 1983 communal riots.

PLOT is a later day (post 1979) development, following Uma Maheswaran's break away from the LTTE when the latter movement, and all of militant Jaffna politics, was in the doldrums. Uma, who was an unimportant Colombo-based cadre in the old-TELO, joined Prabakaran in about 1975. His importance increased when, thanks to an agreement with EROS, he obtained military training in Lebanon in 1977. The LTTE split into a left and a right faction in 1979, which published *Puthia Pathai* (New Path) and *Unarvu* (Dedication) respectively. At the time Uma remained loyal to Prabakaran and the right wing tendency. Somewhat later, largely out of personal rivalry, he broke away to join what remained of the left group and to re-organise it into PLOT.

Characterisations

A closer characterisation of the ideology and organisation of the five most important groups and a few notes on their more recent history follows. All of them, however, have the following general features in common.

1. A programmatic commitment to a separate Tamil State called Eelam.
2. An internal mix of Tamil nationalist, Marxist and broad democratic currents, with wide differences in the 'ratios' of the mix.
3. A membership almost wholly in the under-40 age group; most leaders being in their mid-30s, while the cadres are younger and include many teenagers.
4. Armed units and a commitment to armed struggle and a mix between the methods of terrorism and liberation war;¹⁰ political headquarters in Madras and cadres distributed between Tamil Nadu and 'Eelam'.
5. Partial support from the Tamil people for the Eelam demand and substantial support for resistance to the army; some erosion of this support is, however, visible recently because of hardships of war, resentment at continued extortion and fear of the militants themselves in the 'liberated zones'.
6. Relationships with the central government in Delhi and the State government in Tamil Nadu and with Indian political parties, especially the Dravidian, the CPs and the right; political and/or financial and/or arms-and-training support are provided by official or party sources.
7. Financial support from the expatriate Tamil community in the US, Europe and elsewhere; links with Palestinian and other liberation organisations and certain states.

It is important, however, to bear in mind that there are variations from one group to the next in respect of the actual form and extent that each of these features take.

The LTTE

This is the largest, best armed and most militarily disciplined of all the organisations and is effectively in control of the Jaffna peninsula, having succeeded in confining the army within its fortifications. The majority of the direct encounters since about October 1981, which led to the army's setback in the north, can be credited to the LTTE. Its armed cadres probably exceed 3,000 and there are several thousand more sympathisers.

As an ideology and an organisation the LTTE has several very significant features. Firstly and above all else it is a one-man leadership group. The custom that Prabaharan will make the final decision on all important matters is established. A closed inner circle consisting of some of the regional military commanders and some close family and VVT associates bears an important consultative relationship to him.

The second important aspect is that the LTTE alone of all the organisations does not have separate political and military apparatuses. There is only one organisation, which is laid out on military lines; it is an army. The LTTE does not interest itself in trying to bring about social change in the Tamil community at the present time — land, caste, dowry and worker issues must await their proper time. The attitude is that these are divisive issues which weaken the Tamil community, when the essential task is to unite against the Sinhalese enemy.

Hence, the ideology of the LTTE is narrow Tamil nationalism. Its leadership is a Tamil speaking petty-bourgeoisie unlike most other organisations whose leaders are bilingual — in a sense it is closer to the sea and the soil. One of its spokesmen, A.S. Balasingham, does make statements couched in turgid and formal Marxist language. However, Balasingham does not belong to the decision making inner circle and his Marxism does not reflect any significant current within the LTTE; it is indeed an aberration in real LTTE ideology.

LTTE publications¹¹ — the few so far — glorify armed struggle and link it to 'revolution' but not to socialism. Thus, there is no discrimination between Cuba and Zimbabwe, Vietnam and Algeria or China and Nicaragua, all of which are equally praiseworthy as manifestations of the armed struggle. After pulverising TELO in Jaffna, Prabaharan stated¹² his belief in the monopoly of power in the hands of one organisation and in the one-party state.

Recently, the level of desertions from the LTTE appear to have increased markedly. There are two reasons for this. One is that the rigid internal structure, the one-man leadership style and the absence of scope for internal discussion first drove away the mainly Jaffna University intellectuals, who were clustering round the LTTE. Subsequently, the drop-out spread to include a broader spectrum. Secondly, the scale and brutality of the attack on TELO irreparably damaged the nationalist ideology of saving the Tamils from the Sinhalese

The LTTE has not only made public its lack of respect for democratic rights, it has been equally unashamed about its ruthless disrespect for human rights. Thus it is

willing to settle political differences of opinion with repression, bigotry and assassination and population problems with the large-scale murder of Sinhalese villages, women and infants only comparable with the Sinhala army's equally horrendous disrespect for the human rights of Tamils.

To answer the hypothetical questions "what will a Tamil Eelam under the LTTE look like?" one would say, "A strong militarised State with severe restrictions on bourgeois democratic freedoms, some economic concessions to the people because of the influence of the large armed and mobilised youth base, the emergence of an economic interest group as an alliance of the state/military bureaucracy and small and middle business (there are no large ones left in Jaffna), to which class hegemony will gradually pass. An LTTE State will be a form of Third World neo-fascism."

The TELO

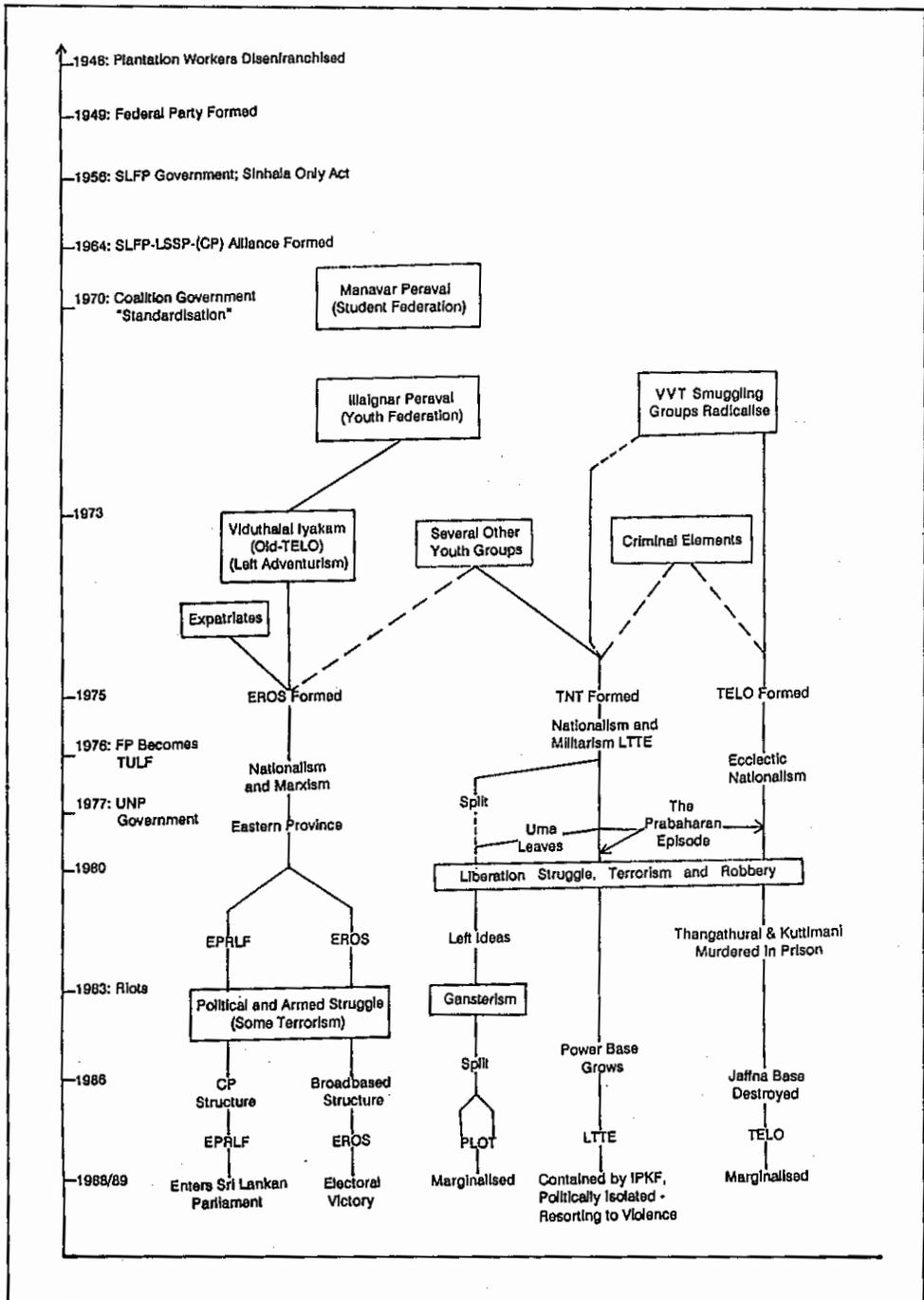
From the historiographic sketch presented earlier it is no doubt clear that TELO could be influenced and used by other dominant forces simply because of the emptiness of its ideological interior. This is just what happened. Firstly, TELO was used by India and secondly it has, since 1983, been influenced by middle-class Tamil professionals and intellectuals who are committed to Eelam, but are strongly anti-Marxist.

TELO was the major beneficiary of the training programme organised by India in 1983-84, and obtained the largest share of arms in the early stages. Initially, TELO may have benefited simply by being the most prompt to take advantage of the opportunities provided, but soon enough the usefulness of the organisation to India as a lever in bringing Jayewardene under control and as a counter-weight to the LTTE, which has always been a truculent body by New Delhi standards, became a factor. India built up TELO right up to the middle of 1985, and with this support TELO scored a number of military successes in the Northern Province such as the successful operation against a train ferrying troops from Colombo to Jaffna on 19 January 1985, and the over running of the Chavakachcheri police station in November 1984.

In a situation where youth gravitate to whatever organisation momentarily displays the most dramatic military fireworks, TELO grew rapidly in numbers during 1984 and early 1985, and began to challenge the LTTE for hegemony.

TELO's downfall came about because of its own internal indiscipline, its pre-disposition for collecting riff-raff around it and the lack of orientation in its politics. The internal disagreement over what were essentially petty issues with the Das group, the military backbone of TELO, was 'settled' by assassinating Das. The rest of the group deserted, leaving TELO badly weakened and its Indian supporters fed up. Extortion and robbery in Jaffna became the order of the day as TELO's name became synonymous with gangsterism. TELO simply made itself a sitting duck and the LTTE quickly re-established its predominance in the peninsula in three days of ruthless military action which finished off TELO in the peninsula.

Genesis of the Tamil militant movements



The remnants have fled to Madras and Chelvam has succeeded the assassinated Sri Sabaratnam as leader, a choice which is likely to increase TELO's dependence on middle-class Tamil intellectuals and professionals exiled in India and elsewhere. The funds raised for TELO in the past among expatriate Tamils, reputed to be very large sums, are also likely to be affected by its post-June 1986, lame-duck condition. The absence of any significant internal ideological content and the relative unimportance of the middle class sections it attempts to lean on as a force in the liberation process, strengthen the conclusion that TELO is only of marginal significance in the period ahead.

The PLOT

Although PLOT went through a short period of popularity from 1979 to 1983, its significance has rapidly waned, and today it functions as a mafia type organisation on the fringes of the liberation struggle. Its early ephemeral popularity is attributable to the ease with which one could join (to join the LTTE one had to enlist as a military cadre), and to the eye-catching Annacottai Police Station and Killinochchi Peoples Bank operations.

Uma Maheswaran's claim to be preparing systematically for a single decisive assault instead of "frittering away resources on LTTE type guerilla activities" was soon seen to be untrue. Far from systematic preparation, PLOT was going from crisis to crisis — internal killings, numbering somewhere between one and two hundred, large scale drug trafficking and other problems, have all but wiped out its once sizeable Jaffna base. The 1986 split simply sealed this fate with graphic accusations and counter-accusations of murders, robberies and drug related matters pouring out and thereby confirming the marginalisation of PLOT as a political organisation.¹³ Despite occasional resuscitation by passing events or the role of the agent of this or that major political formation, as a real political movement, PLOT is quite irrelevant.

A point that needs to be noted for the sake of the completeness of the record, however, is that PLOT has provided the Sinhalese left parties with armed protection at times of grave danger, while other Tamil movements, especially EROS, have been cynical and indifferent to the dangers that Sinhala left parties have to face in their fight against Sinhala chauvinism.

The EROS and EPRLF

These two organisations are the fundamental determinants of left-wing and socialist politics within the Tamil liberation movements. Depending on the process of struggle and settlement, they could play a major contributory role in resuscitating revolutionary left politics in Sinhalese areas. When Kethiswaran of the EPRLF remarks "The Eelam demand is to do with the question of state power" it denotes a

significant refocussing of relationships between Tamil nationalism and Sri Lankan class politics.

EROS, out of which EPRLF appeared as a split in 1980, was founded in London in late 1975 by a Marxist intellectual, Ratnasabapathy, in an environment of Tamil émigré politics – some escaping from repression and others settled in the UK. Although Ratnasabapathy himself had been close to the Federal Party before parting in disillusionment, the majority of the younger cadres who joined EROS when the movement very quickly started putting down roots in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka, were those who had passed through the old-TELO experiences. Ratnasabapathy's good relations with other (foreign) liberation movements also made possible early armed training of cadres.

Two fundamental differences marked off this movement from its inception – an explicit socialist and Marxist orientation and secondly a concentration of resources in the Tamil areas outside the Jaffna peninsula, that is the Eastern Province, non-peninsular Northern Province and unique among the groups, the plantation areas. It is a striking factor that because of the longstanding conservatism of Tamil society, Marxism did not really take a foothold through the forty year Sinhalese Marxist tradition. It finally arrived through a separate route in the wake of the nationalist liberation struggle.

The strategy of concentrating outside the peninsular is partly because a radical social ideology is easier to preach among the more plebian Tamils outside tradition-bound Jaffna. It may also have had to do with difficulties in competing with TELO, LTTE and later on, PLOT. The result, however, has been that LTTE dominance in populous Jaffna, the epicentre of the Tamil cultural ethos, has been established with its resulting political implications. This dominance should not, however, be overstated. Both EPRLF and EROS, mainly the former, have fair footholds in the peninsula. EROS is indisputably the major force in the Eastern Province where it has a large political cadre and an armed cadre. These movements are also drawn into social issues such as land and caste questions in their areas of influence.

The linkage between socialism and nationalism in EROS/EPRLF has always been flexible. From an early stage born of despondency at what was seen as betrayal of both, socialism and the Tamils by the LSSP and CP, and the need to prioritise Tamil issues, through a period of simpler formulae such as, "Eelam, but it must be socialist" or "Eelam is but a stage to wider Sri Lankan socialism," these movements have now arrived at a stage where they must confront more complex issues which are the subject of the closing section of this chapter.

It is also in these two organisations that one sees the Marxist, Tamil nationalist and radical democratic currents most clearly in interaction. In theoretical formulations the first named predominates, but when practical issues of negotiations with the Sri Lankan government, relationships with the Sinhalese left, tactics of economic sabotage, civilian casualties, excesses in Tamil areas and military matters arise, such a clear predominance of any one current is absent.

Organisationally, EROS is still surprisingly amorphous for its ten years of age. No formal congress had been held till the 1987 Accord nor have formal political and organisational resolutions, a time honoured left tradition of measuring alternative perspectives and indicating tactics and strategies, been adopted. The authority structure and committee system survive in the primitive forms in which they were established in the early years. A three-man control committee consisting of Shanker, Balakumaran and Nesan co-ordinate mass work, armed tactics, Madras politics and external affairs. Internal democracy works, to what extent it can, through tradition and comradeship, rather than established procedures and systematic ways of discussing and resolving differences. Obviously excessive informalism is a serious internal drawback at present.

These organisational matters, compounded by personality conflicts, contributed to the 1980 split in which Padmanabha, Varathan, Devanayagam and most of the student wing General Union of Eelam Students (GUES), split from Ratnasabapathy and the main Eastern Province base. Since then EPRLF has structured itself much more formally; a prominent flow diagram showing the linkages from the party (EPRLF) to the armed wing (PLA) and the various peoples' organisations (collectively the EPLF) hangs in the party office. It appears that some degree of success has been achieved on the ground in implementing this structure and a congress was held in June 1984.

Ideologically the EPRLF has moved close to a communist party type position, including fraternal links with Indian and other CPs, an understanding with Habash's PFLP (EROS relates to the PLO), support for the Soviet position in Afghanistan and a rejection of Maoist or other pro-Chinese positions. This overall disposition is not, however, uniformly spread across the whole organisation or even leadership.

However, recent tensions between the PLA (commanded by Devanayagam) and the EPRLF, as well as personality conflicts between Padmanabha, the general secretary and Devanayagam are a disturbing new feature. Another negative feature is the inability of the leadership to bring fully under control the anti-social excesses of cadres newly acquired in the post-1983 influx, which is undermining the EPRLF's potential to take socialist messages to the Tamil people.

There is a long term parallelism of interests between EROS and EPRLF, arising simply from their avowed left positions and their professed determination to see the Eelam (nationalist) struggle only in the wider perspective of Sri Lanka, or indeed sub-continental socialism. This parallelism will survive even though other alliances and united fronts may prove transitory. For example, if some sort of settlement comes out of the current round of negotiations, efforts will be made by the government of Sri Lanka as well as by erstwhile allies to marginalise these two movements. Sectarianism, which has plagued the left the world over, is here too a potential danger that these two organisations must become mature enough to overcome.¹⁴

A major issue is that EROS, despite its strong grass roots base, has not accepted the challenge that its only real political future lies in firmly committing itself to the goal of displacing the LTTE as the effective leaders of the Tamil people. EPRLF has accepted and decided to fight the LTTE; EROS has not. Tactically EROS may be right in avoiding a challenge in the short term which may have turned out to be militarily disastrous. Strategically, it would be disastrous to EROS and it will undermine the whole purpose for the existence of these two organisations, if EROS fails to understand that the LTTE is its ideological opposite.

The alliances

V. Karalasingham, a Tamil Samasamajist of the old school, when he was still a fine Marxist, was wont to remark, "There is no way out for the Tamil people on their own, their alliances with the Sinhalese bourgeoisie have come to a dead end, the only way out is an alliance with the working class."¹⁵ Karalasingham could not, in 1963, have foreseen that the Tamils would try out one more alliance, with the Indian State, nor could he have seen that the class struggle would for a period be captured as an aspect within the politically overdetermined unfolding of the ethnic conflict. Had he foreseen this, however, he would have characteristically and quite accurately remarked that this would be another raw deal.

In exile in India since 1983, all of the leadership of the Tamil liberation groups came to depend heavily on the Indian State; for a period at least. If it was only a matter of dependence for ordinance, training and diplomacy it would have been another matter, but in the period before Mrs. Gandhi's assassination there was much foolish faith that India would 'stand by the Tamils' and mediate a final settlement; perhaps even deliver Eelam.

Fortunately, the Tamil militants learned faster than the Mukti Bahini did, that the interests of the Indian State overlapped only with part of their own. Indeed, since the collapse of the Thimpu talks, relations between the groups, especially the LTTE, and India have been strained. Instances of Indian arm twisting, impounding of shipments and threats to close down the camps were as frequent as instances when the carrot was offered.

With the replacement of Bhandari by Chidambaram as the man in charge, India got its act together much more firmly — gone were the days when the military establishment and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) went their way independently of the Foreign Office and the Home Ministry. New Delhi's interests were quite clear cut and in order of priority they were; (1) to establish Indian supremacy as the dominant regional power, (2) to make quite sure that Sri Lanka was not partitioned but that any lesser solution should stick, (3) to make equally sure that Marxist and revolutionary socialist tendencies were kept well in check, and (4) that south Indian Dravidian sentiment was not injured to the detriment of the Congress Party's electoral prospects. The first has been so amply conceded by both Sri Lanka and the Tamils

(TULF and militants), that for India there remained only the objective of achieving a negotiated settlement that got this problem out of New Delhi's hair with maximum mileage on the other three counts.

Why negotiations kept coming unstuck was that Sinhala chauvinism in Jayewardene's backyard aborted such terms as even India believed minimal to make a settlement stick, and secondly the different Tamil militant groups, in various ways, were constantly at cross purposes with the Indian State in respect of (2) and (3). The ability to use the democratic space in India and to deal with the two Tamil Dravidian parties and wider Indian democratic forces has been the main reason why the militants were able to resist more direct manipulation by India. By late 1986, these relationships on all sides were uneasy — that is among the movements, between them and M.G. Ramachandran and Karunanidhi, and above all with New Delhi.

This returns the discussion to the other alliance, that between the subaltern classes and the oppressed nationalities, but now in a conjuncture where the ethnic instance is the overdetermined one; not a classical Leninist conjuncture at all. There is of course something of the chicken and the egg in the spread of chauvinism to large sections of the working class and the decline of the ability of the LSSP and CP to function as bulwarks against chauvinism. It is also evident¹⁶ that the CP, and to a lesser extent the LSSP, is now taking important steps to make amends for having succumbed to the ideological hegemony of petty-bourgeois Sinhala chauvinism in the populist period.

However, so far as positional alliances between political traditions (classes and oppressed nationalities), are concerned, too much water has flowed under the bridge for the old-left to matter again. The future depends, on the Sinhalese side, so far as party politics is concerned on the SLMP and the NSSP, and outside party politics on a number of democratic and peoples organisations which have sprung up expressly to combat chauvinism. The JVP, the other 'left party', has opted out of this by suffering a relapse of racism that has reversed the positive achievements of the 1975-80 'rectification' period and thereafter succumbed to a neo-fascist terrorist ideology.¹⁷

The NSSP, though a small left party, has been discussing the national question in the positive left tradition. Even during the long gestation period, before it emerged from a split in the LSSP in 1977, one cardinal issue that marked the NSSP was the analysis of the LSSP as having succumbed to chauvinism. What is more important, however, is that its sustained campaign on the right of the Tamils to self-determination and the recognition of the Tamils as an oppressed nation, has had an impact far out of proportion to the size of the NSSP itself. (A number of small left groups have also taken up similar positions, but lacking both a trade union base and a mass constituency, their impact has been limited to small radical circles).

The impact is that gradually this set the tone whereby the criterion of a "principled Leninist stand on the national question as the touchstone of Marxism" is once again a live issue to which every left party has, willy-nilly to address itself. In some instances the response may be discomfiture or apologetics, but that it has become an issue at all in the left is an enormously healthy sign.

Where the NSSP has come short is in its inability to translate programmatic positions into practical alliances with the Tamil militants. It has fought shy of any functional relationships. It is an oversimplification to attribute this, as some analysts do, to an inability of general secretary Vickremabahu's Leninist line to completely overcome more conservative sections who are afraid of a Sinhalese backlash. It is more to do with the size and effectiveness of the NSSP as a mass organisation; the size of the boots that it can credibly climb into. The theoretical position is that the Tamil militants should not disarm and that any settlement, or otherwise, should be but an episode on the path to overthrowing the Jayewardene regime in an alliance with the revolutionary classes in the south. But how to enter into such an alliance in the midst of an ethnic civil war and its complex aftermath and how to make the alliance a matter of mass politics and not a conspiratorial adventure are problems that the NSSP has not successfully solved.

The other left party whose role is significant in the long run is the SLMP, a 1982 breakaway from Mrs Bandaranaike's SLFP, led by her younger daughter Chandrika and her popular actor husband Viyaya Kumaranatunga up to the time of the latter's assassination by the JVP. The SLMP was the left wing of the SLFP and the leadership made and (despite lapses from time to time, inevitable in an organisation with a petty-bourgeois ideology, however radical) continues to make efforts to limit its concessions to Sinhala chauvinism. Being the nearest thing to a radical social democracy that one can get in a Third World situation, the SLMP is obsessed with perceptions of electoral advantage. Hence its lapses, such as when it succumbed to Sinhala chauvinism and opposed granting citizenship to 92,000 plantation Tamils and their issue in February 1986 — a Jayewardene concession to India.

Both SLMP leader Vijaya, accompanied by Chandrika, and NSSP leader Vasudeva finally took the plunge and went to Madras in June–July 1986 to make direct contact with the militants. It is of course a little pathetic that this boldness had to await Jayewardene's trail blazing open negotiations with the 'terrorists' at Thimpu! In Madras, Vasudeva spoke of the need to get together to overthrow the government and defeat the army, Vijaya of the urgent need for a negotiated settlement. The former had difficulty in concretising the alliance, the latter at times sounded like an emissary of the Sri Lankan State.

In the 1988/89 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, however, these two parties finally overcame their prevarications and grew to full stature. They alone put forward a democratic, non-racist and mature programme to end Sri Lanka's racist legacy. They fared badly at the polls — a measure of how far both the Sinhala and Tamil people still are from escaping from this legacy.

In the straightforward Leninist schema, the revolutionary class, in a conjuncture dominated by the class struggle, achieves the alliance by standing before the oppressed nation as its liberator; this also underwrites the continuity between the socialist and

democratic tasks. The SLMP and the NSSP represent two alternative left ideologies and approaches to the ethnic issue; both face immense difficulties. The reason does not lie in the crisis that left movements universally face during periods of defeat and reaction. Quite on the contrary, it has been argued in these pages that the regime is in crisis, the military has been checked and that to a degree, the question of State power is being posed.

The totality of the social crisis, the confluence of different histories of crises (the economic, the political/constitutional, the class dynamics), is manifest most sharply in the ethnic. Contradictions in the different structural levels of society converge with explosive force in the ethnic civil war. A pre-revolutionary situation as it were, but not dominated by class struggle. Marxist practice and theory must, therefore, brace itself to deal with something far more complex than what the 'Right of Nations to Self-Determination' or the pluralism radical social democracy has so far foreseen.

Settlements and solutions

In that portion of the mundane world where, under the stern gaze of India, the Sri Lankan government, the TULF and occasionally the militants, negotiated, there was incessant activity for all of three years from 1984-87. What were the real options?

1. Continuing failure of negotiations and the making and breaking of ceasefires – essentially a prolongation of the armed conflict.
2. A settlement of sorts which increases the democratic breathing space and opens the way to other levels and new forms of struggle.
3. A 'settlement' which exterminates the left tendencies within the militant groups, imposes some deal agreed to between Jayewardene, the TULF and some sections of the militants and is implemented with Indian cannon fire.

The third neo-fascist variant was, because of the prevailing balance of power in the militant movements, fortunately, the least likely. The term balance of power here did not only include the equations between nationalist and left currents; it included another factor, which was that Tamil nationalism itself would see this as an ethnic sell-out. Left and democratic opinion would not have been effective as an opposition to this in Sri Lanka, but their Indian counterparts, together with south Indian sentiments, constituted important obstacles.

The alternatives, therefore were either the prolongation of the conflict or a settlement which allowed the militants to return to Sri Lanka and swarm into the national political fabric. The latter would have spelt the doom of the Jayewardene regime.¹⁸ It was the blend of momentarily hardened and widespread Sinhala feelings

and the clever parading, before a war weary nation, of the possibility of a settlement that transiently propped up the regime. Prolonging of the war would have led to disillusion which pure and simple chauvinism, an ideology no longer in full throated battle cry but in ebb tide, could not adequately stem. The political block behind and within the UNP would break up; class unrest would develop. Tails, Jayewardene would have lost.

Heads, the anti-authoritarian struggle wins. To allow the Tamil militants to set up shop as a legitimate, democratic and effective political presence in Sri Lanka would be suicidal for the regime, which would be unable to withstand the ferment that their free run through the country would induce in the subaltern classes of Sinhala society.

It would not have gone unnoticed by the perspicacious reader that the possibility of secession and the founding of Tamil Eelam has not featured as an alternative throughout this analysis. The omission keeps the discussion within the range of real options; it also corresponds to the deeper perceptions of the militants themselves of what is truly realisable. In the context of India's stand and aware that in considerable measure their own success is the reflected glory of the power of the Indian State, every militant group, in its heart of hearts, has given up the Eelam option. However, as the discussion up to now has shown, the unfolding of even a lesser option, such as autonomy, imperils either the Sri Lanka regime or the militant movements.

To the Tamil militants it is, therefore, becoming clear that whatever settlements dot the wayside, there can be no solution on a capitalist basis, or more sharply, while the UNP or the SLFP hold State power. The Eelam struggle which got off to a start by saying, "what the Sinhalese do in 'their country' is their business, all we want is our country, Eelam", has now come a long way as it proceeds to set itself precisely the task of overthrowing the State in the 'Sinhalese country'. Concurrently for the left in the south, it is surely becoming clear enough that if the question of 'capitalism or socialism?' is to be posed at all in this period, it will be through the transmutations and crisis of State power which the ethnic civil war will induce. The Sri Lankan revolution thus reaches a new point of departure.

Despite the ripeness of so many conditions, does the difficulty of bridging the class and the ethnic in sombre relationships corresponding to real power correlations, signal some primordial separateness of ethnic identities, some unchangeable in the psyche of *homo-ethnicus* or some fundamental inadequacy of the epistemic issuing from historical materialist categories?

Certainly, the theme of this chapter has been to sharpen and develop some of these categories in the context of a retarded and bastard capitalism and a Third World regime of crisis – near universals in the neo-colonial world, one might add. But nowhere has it been necessary to jettison class analysis or declare it a reductionism. Material and social dynamics, specifically the contemporary ones of the last three or four decades, have framed the ideologies seen to be in motion in this study, primordial identities and cultural givens being but a receiving medium, rather like the passive soups in which biologists culture their specimens.

What this discourse has revealed is an altogether deeper nexus between democratic and socialist 'tasks'. In the last decade many currents have recognised this need. For example, in India myriad non-party political formations and voluntary organisations have stepped in to fill the breach as the left parties abandon vast tracts of social contradiction.¹⁹

But they are frankly at a loss on how to confront the question of the State from within their limited confines. They do indeed see well enough that minus State power their answers are interim, 'non-ultimate' and 'not-system-transforming'; but are unable to articulate the lineage between their people-democratic essence and the fundamental question of the State. But at least they have their feet planted firmly on *terra firma*, unlike some others in the West who speak in tongues and accomplish feats of verbal gymnastics such as Laclau-Mouffee.²⁰

The theme of this chapter has been to show that the democratic is something more than a staging post on the road to the socialist. The overdetermination of the ethnic instance has been something more than a mere or particular phenomenological manifestation or the appearance of an essence. It is, but it is also something other than a specific manifestation of the crisis of retarded capitalism in general. It points to the permanency of the democratic struggle itself. Not simply in the banal sense of 'before' and 'after', but more fundamentally in the violence done to the concept of subordinating the State to the people and hence to the prophecy of the withering away of the State, and therefore to historical materialism itself, which is implicit in all assumptions of 'completing the democratic tasks'.

Avoided issues now become more unavoidable for both those who desire to 'liberate their people' and for those who wish to 'build the revolutionary party'. How to think the terms of their mutual organisational fusion in conditions more complex than the former's pre-suppositions and a reality more bountiful than the prejudices of "What is to be done?" in which the latter have been schooled?

In tandem there arises the paradox of the fragmented multiplicity of the focuses of people power and cause-oriented grassroots democracy as opposed to the centrality of the State question in the final analysis. What are these fragments without 'the party'; what 'the party' without them? This complementary and two sided act of intervention, demands a democratic and revolutionary synthesis of a new type. The old style front organisations used by communist parties in the past only caricature today's reality and are unequal to today's needs. Even Gramsci addressed himself to somewhat different issues from those posed by the imperatives of this new revolutionary democratic synthesis. If theory of how to do tails the praxis of those who are groping towards the doing, it would not be the first time that the owl of Minerva flew only at dusk.

Notes

1. Useful general background to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka including statistical analyses will be found in;

Kumari Jayawardena, Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka, Centre for Social Analysis, Sri Lanka, 1985.

Inter-Racial Equity and National Unity in Sri Lanka, Marga Institute, Colombo, (n.d.).

V.P. Vaidik, Ethnic Crisis in Sri Lanka: India's Options, National Publishing, New Delhi, 1986.

Sri Lanka: The Ethnic Conflict: Myths, Realities and Perspectives, The Committee for Rational Development (Colombo), Navrang Publishing, New Delhi, 1978.

2. The United National Party has been the traditional party of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, after the early populist radicalism subsided, increasingly played the role of the alternative party.
3. The Citizenship Act, No. 18 of 1948; The Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act, No.3 of 1949; The Ceylon Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Act, No.48 of 1949.
4. The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of July 1957 which made provision for the establishment of Regional Councils, delegation of not insubstantial powers, selection of allottees in land colonisation and for the use of Tamil as the language of administration in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, was a serious attempt to devolve power and find a resolution to communal differences.
5. The reports that Amnesty International has brought out over the years — especially Sri Lanka: Current Human Rights Violations and Evidence of Extra-Judicial Killings by the Security Forces (July 1983–April 1984) and File on Torture: Sri Lanka, October 1985 — and the Tamil Times, published monthly in London (PO Box 304), are the most reliable.
6. A good summary of project details and official intentions including a comprehensive bibliography of official studies and reports is, The Accelerated Mahaveli Development Programme, R.S. Cooke, Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka, Transactions, 1982.
7. Gunasinghe discusses what he aptly terms the “differential impact of the economic structure,” both before and after 1977, on ethno-politics. Although in certain respects too deterministic, his insights overall, are penetrating and valid. See, “The Open Economy and its Impact on Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka,” by Newton Gunasinghe in Sri Lanka: The Ethnic Conflict: Myths, Realities and Perspectives, op.cit.
8. The report Emergency '79 by the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, Colombo 1979, documents the first ruthless campaign of the armed forces in response to Jayewardene's Churchillian directive to Brigadier Weeratunga., (Churchill to General Alexander).
9. How the Sri Lanka government tottered in the pre-Thimpu period is discussed in “Sri Lanka After Two Years of Ethnic Violence,” Kumar David, Asian Exchange, Vol. III No.4 + Vol. IV, No.1, July 1985.
10. The distinction between an armed liberation struggle and terrorism is vital for Marxists; especially today when terrorism has, worldwide, evoked mass abhorrence. Restricting our delineation strictly to the Tamil case, armed liberation may be defined as actions against the State's armed forces, military/intelligence installations, squads of ultra-racist killers like the para-military “Home Guards” and possibly very high profile political targets. Terrorism includes the indiscriminate planting of explosives, deliberate attacks on civilians, attacks on so-called “economic targets” which usually entail civilian casualties (the Air Lanka, CTO and factory bombings for example) or other use of violence which are insensitive to the issue of splitting the Sinhalese masses from chauvinism. The settling of political differences between or within liberation organisations — or for that matter the settling of policy or ideology differences with any other political party — by force, is not only terrorism, but also sows the seeds of future dictatorship.
11. For example, Sosalisa Tamileelathai Noki (Towards a Socialist Tamil Eelam), March 1980; Arasu Payangaravathamum Ayutha Poratamum (State Terrorism and Armed Struggle), Sept. 1983; Towards Liberation, Sept. 1984 and Diary of Combat, March 1985.
12. “Profile of a Tiger: An Interview with V. Prabaharan,” India Today, Vol.XI, No.12, June, 1986.
13. The most damning publications are Puthiathor Ulaham (A New World) and the “Statement of the ‘Majority’ Expelling Uma Maheswaran and Others after the PLOT ‘Central Committee’ Meeting” in Jaffna in February 1986, (in Tamil).
14. These words have proved to be more than prophetic in 1989. EROS and EPRLF has captured 25 seats in the Tamil areas of the Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka (nearly 100%) in the Feb. 1989

parliamentary elections. There is an uneasy truce between them. The real sources of conflict lie not in the rejection of Belam (which both instinctively concede) nor in their alignment with Sinhalese democratic and left movements. The conflicts lie in purely historical, tactical and, unfortunately, personal problems.

15. V. Karalasingham, The Way Out for the Tamil Speaking People, Samasamaja Publications, 1962.
16. The statement adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka at its meetings on 7 and 8 June 1986, is a further consolidation of a credible movement away from a previous period of retreating in the face of petty-bourgeois chauvinism. The rectification has been gaining strength over the last five to six years.
17. Kumari Jayawardena, op. cit., discusses the three phases of JVP ethnic politics – an early phase of petty-bourgeois anti-Tamilism, the “rectification” and since 1982–83 a return to a more calculated and opportunistic beating of the anti-Tamil drum. Jayawardena's thesis overall, however, is fatally marred by an inexplicable failure to discuss the role of those sections of the left movement which have put up a fight against chauvinism, specifically the NSSP, several cause oriented democratic fronts and to a certain extent the SLMP. Hence the apogee of her analysis is bleak defeatism in the face of “Sinhala chauvinist hegemony.”
18. Jayawardene was finally eased out of power in December 1988 and these predictions have proved to be true.
19. Many in Asia, like Rajni Kothari, in “Masses, Classes and the State,” Economic and Political Weekly, 1 February 1986, pin their hopes for the future on these formations.
20. Try this one for limpid clarity:
“In the context of this discussion, we will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is mediated as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, in so far as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call moments. By contract, we will call elements any difference that is not discursively articulated. In order to be correctly understood, these distinctions require three main types of specification: with regard to the characteristic coherence of the discursive formation; with regard to the dimensions and extensions of the discursive; and with regard to the openness or closure exhibited by the discursive formation.” Laclau and Mouffee, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Verso, 1985.
And page after page of this diarrhoea; at least when pure mathematicians engage in the contortions of symbolic logic their theorems have the advantage of strict rigour.

13

Ethnic conflicts in South Asia

Kumar Rupesinghe and Smitu Kothari

This chapter is primarily concerned with a comparative analysis of the nationalist assertions of the Sikhs in India and the Tamils of Sri Lanka. It is an attempt to understand the departure from the early promise of independence, i.e. secular democracy, to a consolidation of majoritarian hegemonic assertions by the Hindus of India and the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka.

In both instances, violence escalated around the early 1980s, and in both cases comparable tactics and strategies were used by the State: authoritarian stratagems to deal with political problems. In both instances, State terrorism was countered by counter violence, leading to a spiral of violent conflict. In both instances, sections of the Tamils and the Sikhs sought to advertise their grievances through methods of selected violence, and through the vast diaspora across the borders of Europe, the USA and Canada. Both communities experienced State inspired pogroms (in 1983 in Sri Lanka and 1984 in India). Moreover, the character and structure of these pogroms had striking similarities. Further, in both instances, the political leadership attempted to reach agreements with these minority assertions, through agreements and accords. Whilst concentrating on the emergence of Sikh and Tamil nationalism, we will argue that these 'ethnic conflicts' are in reality a highly complex web of 'protracted social conflicts' based on a complex need for identity, social justice and security.

The foundations

Needless to say, the current ethnic revival in South Asia and the present boundaries cannot be understood without a grasp of the colonial period. It is also important, both to understand the transfer of power to the separate countries in the region (particularly, how power was transferred), and to note that the colonial administration

paid scant attention to ensuring that necessary guarantees for minority interests would be provided in the constitutions.

Britain was the only colonial power to succeed in creating a single administrative unit. Throughout its colonial rule of over two hundred years, it converted almost the entire economy of South Asia into a colonial economy. However, it is in the way in which mercantilist and industrial capitalism was introduced into the region that specifies the limits of the colonial division of labour. In some regions there were plantation enclaves with migrant and indentured labour. In other regions, where there was already a nascent industrialisation, these efforts were subverted and restructured to suit the colonial division of labour.

How was a relatively small and distant colonial power able to rule over such a vast empire? For surely, this was a colossal exercise in managing ethnic diversity and religious pluralism? Of course, the answer to this question has already been provided. It was not only the British superiority in weaponry and sea power, but also the way in which the British were able to play on the mosaic of religious and ethnic diversity throughout the region. Playing one against the other was the keystone of British diplomacy. To secure loyalty and alliances, the British succeeded in building a web of patron-client relationships which spanned entire ethnic networks. Nor was the policy of divide and rule uniform, for it naturally adapted to existing ethnic balances and tensions within each given territory.¹

Some of the nations in the region, such as India and Pakistan, and later Bangladesh, were born out of extraordinary violence and bloodshed. Sri Lanka and Nepal escaped this baptism of blood. It was only in India, however, that after independence substantial efforts were made to discuss a constitution which could accommodate the plurality of its linguistic heritage by creating a federal system based on linguistic and national diversity.

In Sri Lanka, despite Tamil reservations and the demand for a federal system or greater regional autonomy, the Donoughmore Commission transferred the British Constitutional model, with majoritarian rule, to a weak Sinhalese bourgeoisie. The question of dealing with a major linguistic and religious minority was left entirely to the discretion of the Sinhalese ruling class.

Pakistan, on the other hand, born out of the divisive 'management' of the British and the inability of the nationalist elites to fully accommodate multiple ethnicities, was also unable to give constitutional guarantees of equal rights to all its diverse minorities and the various divisions within the Muslim community. Bangladesh, although not a direct product of British intent or indifference, is itself a classic example of failed centre-State relations leading to secession.

Post-colonial State formations

In general, the ruling classes which inhabited the political space of the State were — for a time at least — secularist and modernist in their approach to State formation.

With political independence, the elites promised rapid modernisation and industrialisation along with increased political participation. The State was defined as strongly interventionist, particularly in the management and direction of economic life. We must, however, distinguish between a secular ideology and a secular State. The inheritance of a colonial State does not mean the establishment of a secular State.

The rhetoric of the secular ideology with its liberal and individualist values and vision of the modern enlightenment was strongly at odds with the sub-nationalist group claims of a heterogeneous and plural society. It was also at odds with the growing perception of failed promises among the oppressed who increasingly resorted to seeking their self-validation in religion and ethnicity. And it is here, in this business of nation building and State formation, that ethnicity assumes its particular salience.

In this chapter we shall argue that in the process of State formation, the various political structures (the extreme case being Sri Lanka) allowed for the ethnicisation of the State. We are not maintaining that this was uniform in all the States of South Asia. What we do hold is that majority nationalist assertions, be they religious or ethnic, captured the instruments of the State and gained hegemony over the State apparatus. Ethnicity or religion thus becomes more useful for political legitimisation and domination.

What we witness therefore, is the gradual replacement of anti-imperialist or anti-colonialist ideologies by hegemonic assertions, this in turn providing ideological impetus towards majoritarian rule. What evolved was a type of State formation strongly bound by patron-client loyalties which became all-pervasive where some groups were included and others excluded. This process can also be categorised as the formation of a defective State. One can also talk about the breakdown of the State, where the writ of the government does not run, where there are competing armed groups challenging the legitimacy of the State.

State formation evolved by increasing the power of the centre at the expense of the periphery. And it is precisely in the mediation of relations between hegemonic majorities and minorities in the centre, that ethnic conflict has risen to prominence.

Another tendency, one which has acquired almost policy status, is the way in which the State has interpreted ethnic or minority claims. Over the years, the degree of suspicion and intolerance has increased to a point where minority grievances are met with increased police and military repression. Minority claims are often interpreted as security threats or as threats to the existence of the State itself.

We argue therefore, that not only is conflict endemic in the region, but that there are forces, both traditional and modern, likely to worsen majority-minority relations. Additionally, the deterioration of political institutions seems most likely to intensify ethnic conflicts. This, in turn, underscores the declining capacity of existing institutions to manage conflicts. It is inevitable in this process that as majorities become more self-assertive, a sense of territorial, linguistic or religious fundamentalism provides a new basis for mobilisation and action.

Therefore, in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual societies, conflict management is of central importance. This is particularly so since ethnic claims are a complex of economic interests, needs, and identities. As already mentioned, the post-colonial State has not only not shown good skills in the management of ethnic claims, it has often itself been party to the conflict, or has been partisan, or has escalated the conflict by using authoritarian strategies.

The militarisation of society

Often, conflict management by the State has been a mixture of conflict settlement and cynical conflict escalation strategies. In general, States have used authoritarian strategies, and have increasingly sought military solutions to political and cultural problems.

Adopting political/militaristic solutions to ethnic problems has meant the increased presence of criminal behaviour on both sides, with a vicious cycle of violence leading to the militarisation of the entire society. In some instances, as in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, recruitment to the armed forces has been on ethnic criteria. Such armies have been rightly called ethnic armies.

The militarisation of society and the militarisation of conflict are among the emerging features of the sub-continent. This is reflected in the resources diverted to the purchase of lethal weapons, and the recurrent expenditure to maintain huge and costly armies. On all counts, expenditure on arms purchases has been truly colossal. In Sri Lanka, the military response to domestic conflict has led to an over 500 per cent growth in real terms since 1981. In India, military expenditure doubled from US \$ 4,100 million to US \$ 8,000 million from 1981-87. In Pakistan, there was a similar increase, from US \$ 1,000 million to US \$ 2,106 million. It is worth noting that the military budget for 1986 was 38.5 per cent of total government expenditure. This was more than the combined allocations for rural development and education.²

Even more salient is the growing danger to civil society. By this we mean the militarisation of thinking, of political and social institutions, and the spread of militarism to every corner of civilian life — this can also be called the mercenarisation of society.

The State has extended itself, in forming legal and illegal paramilitary forces, *goondas*, thugs, death squads and private armies in the pursuit of security. Often these lumpen elements and private armies have been deployed against minorities and oppositional forces. The extent to which such extra-legal forces have been deployed against entire ethnic minorities is discussed in the section on pogroms. State terrorism has been countered by guerilla terrorism, involving civilians on both sides.

The extent of general militarisation is also evidenced by other developments. Take for instance the growth of security firms. In Sri Lanka, over one thousand security firms have been established to protect government buildings and companies due to alleged threats from 'terrorist attacks'. Such firms have grown and expanded so much

that the government has had to establish a special ministry to co-ordinate their activities. The pervasiveness of militarisation throughout the past decade is also evidenced by the systematic frisking of civilians when they enter public buildings, offices, even public buses.

It is obvious that militarisation of society does not occur in a vacuum. Almost all South Asian societies have seen a steady decay of political institutions and the rule of law. What is also being witnessed today is the breakdown of the normal law and order provisions of civil society. Rulers in the region have, too often, resorted to emergency provisions, and have themselves abrogated democratic institutions. In India, while democratic institutions have been practically non-existent for the poorest half of the population, even institutions vibrant in the two decades after independence have seen a steady decline. More crucial is the degeneration of the secular spirit among the ruling elites. Combined with a rapidly deteriorating law and order machinery to whom both the government and the opposition look for maintaining peace, there is now a phenomenal growth of people who specialise in violence and terror:

“It is a situation of an ideological vacuum accompanied by the rise of a ‘pragmatic’ younger generation that is no longer driven by idealism but by concern for the here and now. Under pressure of declining economic opportunities and the growing appeal of safeguarding communal and class interests, pragmatism takes on more and more banal forms. The result is terrorism. Hence the growth of not just lumpen but of terrorist squads.”³

Can the post-colonial State in South Asia be conceptualised in terms of a national security State — a State where the security of the nation assumes the highest priority, and where all social and political life is subservient to its imperatives? In view of the fact that minority claims are often seen as security threats, and given the capacity for minorities to mobilise across borders and practice forms of violence at will, the logic of the national security State is to counter this tendency by militarising the entire society.

What is emerging in Sri Lanka and to a certain extent India, is the breakdown of the State. There is a collapse of political authority at the lower reaches of society consequent upon its increasing centralisation and tendency to look outward, and the filling of the vacuum by a new ‘genre’ of politics that combines communal crimes, fundamentalist slogans and pure terrorism. Terrorism is no longer extremist in any political sense, but simply aimed to kill, maim and loot. In many parts of the region, violence has become an end in itself.

The transition to capitalism

Ethnic conflict within the region of South Asia must be viewed with the common trajectory of the transition to capitalism. It would be meaningless to discuss ethnicity

(as some do) as if it had nothing to do with the type of development policies which are undertaken by the State. As pointed out earlier, the economic agenda for the entire region was based on a protectionist phase, i.e. to consolidate national capitalism. In the period of consolidation, import substitution industrialisation, increasing agricultural output through the use of high-yielding varieties (green revolution), became the basis of development. During the second phase, almost all the countries, in varying degrees, adopted open market economies associated with export oriented industrialisation.

What provides salience to ethnic conflict, however, is the uneven development of capitalism in the periphery. To date, all peoples and groups have not been incorporated into the capitalist project. There is still a vast subsistence sector, an informal sector; but most important, there are different social formations which co-exist within the society. These social formations are pre-capitalist in origin, and often are unique in that they have a shared language, shared symbols, and often a shared economic life. For example, in the Jaffna peninsula of Sri Lanka, where the Tamils live, there still exist strong caste stratification, arid land and pre-capitalist social customs and traditions based primarily on group loyalties.

In the south are the Sinhalese, who have been incorporated into capitalist influences, and where there are few remnants of the feudal social formation. The Central Province is inhabited by Sinhalese and by plantation workers. The plantation workers of Indian origin, live in estates with restricted labour mobility. Although they are workers earning a living wage, they are also bound by extra-economic coercion.

The existence of such pre-capitalist social formations has meant that strategies of nation building and particularly State building with its thrust towards centralisation, assimilation and integration has inevitably come in for strong opposition.

This is not to suggest that capitalism dissolves such social formations. The undifferentiated development of capitalism as is generally posed by Bill Warren,⁴ does not sufficiently take into account the resistance and strength of such social formations. Neither is capital, particularly in a pre-capitalist setting, interested in dissolving these social formations if they can be retained to the advantage of capital, in maintaining low wages for instance. It is precisely in this articulation and disarticulation between capital, the State and social formation that we have to discover ethnicity as a form of mobilisation and as an assertion of identity.

Another aspect of relevance in studying ethnicity and the transition to capitalism is the role of merchant capitalism, which in many parts of the region is still the hegemonic form of capitalism. Merchants are either traders, acting as link-men in buying and selling, or are petty artisans who sell their produce in the market. Often in the periphery some ethnic groups have a preponderance of merchants compared to others. In various caste and occupational divisions, some groups specialise in trading, others in buying and selling, acting as link-men or are artisanal. We note that most ethnic riots and pogroms occur in urban environments and not in the countryside. It is

in towns and in the cities where there is inter-ethnic competition in trade, business and commerce. Sometimes, these ethno-merchant groups may have their own professional organisations, their own chambers of commerce, their own financial banks, such as in Sri Lanka.

In the economic division of labour of peripheral capitalism, ethnic stratification has therefore also assumed an economic stratification. However, in a period of intense economic competition, merchants play a profound role in either provoking or supporting ethnic pogroms. The uneven development of capitalism, and the presence of a defective State with a variety of social formations, provides a framework for the discussion of ethnicity, ethnic mobilisation and conflict resolution.

Before we go any further, however, we need to discuss at some length the question of ethnicity and conflicts. The mass media, the press in particular, tend to characterise all conflicts as 'ethnic' conflicts, just as all types of violence tend to be portrayed as 'ethnic' violence. Very rarely in the mass media do we have a discussion of the role of the State as a perpetrator of ethnic conflicts. Nor is there any term to describe the situation when parts of the State inspire an attack on a minority.

In defining ethnicity within the South Asian context, we do not subscribe to those theories which interpret all conflicts as ethnic conflicts. We shall argue that ethnic conflicts, class conflicts, caste and group conflicts, and occupational conflicts, are all part of the multi-dimensional and complex reality. All forms of identity exist in South Asia, ranging from caste, class, ethnic, tribal, occupational to regional and linguistic groups. Ethnicity is therefore a dynamic concept which may have an ethnic character as well as a class character. Further, caste, class and ethnic conflicts can be waged simultaneously. This is why we have decided to use the concept of protracted social conflicts to define these types of conflicts. What is of interest is why some group conflicts assume an ethnic character. As suggested by Edward Azar:

"Protracted social conflicts suggest types of ongoing and seemingly unresolvable conflicts which have enduring features, such as economic and technological under-development and unintegrated social and political systems."⁵ Further, "The source of social conflicts is the denial of those elements required in the development of all peoples and societies, and whose pursuit is a compelling need in all. These are security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity and effective participation in the processes that determine conditions of security and identity and other development requirements."⁶

Also of interest is why some groups define themselves in ethnic terms rather than in class or caste terms, and why ethnicity is used for political mobilisation. Further, not all ethnic conflicts assume a violent form; and often ethnic conflicts are ways in which groups define themselves in relation to the State.

Ethnic stratification

Ethnic stratification and the geographic distribution of ethnic groups provides a framework for assessing under what structural conditions violent conflict may occur. It is, however, not merely the geographical distribution, but the political structures and centre-State relations and cross-border affiliations which may create the potential for assertions of autonomy and secession.

To understand the dynamics of mobilisation processes aimed at political autonomy and secessionist solutions, we have to take into account various factors. These include not only demographic distribution of nationalities, ethnic groups or tribal peoples, but also the strategic location of these groups, their resource bases, economic power and their relationship to the centre. Other factors are whether the group enjoys a contiguous resource base and whether ethnic stratification has a cross-border or regional dimension. With regard to India, we see a fluid political structure with a dominant Hindu majority but with many ethnic and linguistic nationalities within a federal constitutional framework. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, we see an entirely different stratification system: A Sinhalese majority of 70 per cent of the population and the Tamils comprising 20 per cent, but with strong cross-border affiliations and linguistic, religious and cultural ties to the Tamil-speaking peoples of south India.

There are no simple objective criteria for defining a 'minority'. Subjective perceptions – which are often in a process of evolution – are crucial in understanding claims presented by minorities. In terms of the communities' self-perception regarding their minority status, several dimensions are important: Whether the minorities have a conception of a homeland, the extent of the sense of cohesion within the community and whether the community regards itself as a disadvantaged or an achieving minority. Claims and strategies adopted by minorities will depend on the over-determination of the ethnic factor within a given political structure.

Mere objective indicators of minority status and their demographic distribution do not define the potential for violent protracted conflict. The potential for advocacy and claims for secession have therefore depended on whether the political system encourages ethnic diversity, or whether it allows for a dominating majority to exercise ideological and material hegemony over other groups, and of course the way in which the State responds to minority claims. With regard to the minorities themselves, strategies for countervailing power, for advocacy and military guerilla action have depended on cross-border affiliations, material location, diaspora abroad and, certainly, the capacity of the minority to mobilise on the basis of nationalism and internationally through claims for self-determination.

Who constitutes a majority and who constitutes a minority is of course, a matter of perception. What is a majority from one perspective may be a minority from another. Whilst Hindus are a numerical majority in India, they may in some situations perceive themselves to be a minority. Further, Sikhs are regarded and clearly see themselves as a minority. The Assamese are amongst a number of linguistic

communities in India with a State of their own, but they regard themselves as a national minority: surrounded, they point out, by about 150 million or more Bengalis. In Assam, however, Bengalis regard themselves as a minority. Perception of who is a minority and who is a majority is thus a fluid psychological dimension, also in the definition of the evolving identity between the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

Let us now look more specifically at a set of interrelated questions: What shapes the communal mind? Why are democratic struggles for autonomy within the federal set-up looked upon as threatening the 'unity of the nation'? What are the political and religious motives of those who participate in creating and sustaining conflict? Why does the State manipulate majority opinion to ensure its own survival? What forces a spiral of violence and terror and widespread insecurity? What could the possible avenues for conflict resolution be? Where could these impulses come from?

These questions will be taken up within the comparative context of the Sikhs in India and the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The rise of majority consciousness

In contemporary India, conflicts around community identity, while encompassing a whole range of localised skirmishes, demonstrations and protests, have generally meant violent upsurges between Hindus and Muslims. This is primarily because the clashes and tensions between these two communities have been most pronounced and long-lasting. During the freedom movement and the debates on representational government in the early part of this century, Muslims began to feel increasingly isolated and dominated by non-Muslim leaders. A section of the Muslim community formed the Muslim League – the first communal party in contemporary Indian politics.⁷

The recounting of history always has severe limitations because every ideology interprets it in its own terms. As prominent Indian historian, Romila Thapar warns, "It is often forgotten that historical interpretations can be the product of a contemporary ideology."⁸

Nevertheless, certain facts stand out. The nationalist movement undoubtedly attempted to revive the 'glory' of the Hindu past. Historian Bipin Chandra points out that in their search for a national identity that would pre-date the British, Indian nationalists were reluctant to accept the period when the Mughals ruled, as representative of their aspirations.⁹ The Vedic era was powerfully evoked as the period of India's ascendancy as a world civilisation.

Several Muslim scholars have pointed out that the independence movement gave rise to strong Hindu nationalistic impulses. While Jawaharlal Nehru did much to secularise the political formations of the freedom movement, in the main, during this period, Hindu revivalism also took root – a revivalism in which prominent political leaders participated. After years of negotiation, the Muslim leaders had to temporarily withdraw; it was not until the 1920s that the Muslims organised themselves into a

stronger unity to participate in the national movement but, by then, with elements of a demand for a separate State.

Despite Nehru's brave efforts to implement secularism and Gandhi's extensive travels throughout the country during the early and mid-1940s to quell Hindu-Muslim rioting,¹⁰ the nationalism of the Congress grew in conflict with the nationalism of Muslims. In the worst violence ever witnessed in contemporary times in the Indian sub-continent, a sizeable proportion of Muslims formed a separate State, Pakistan.

Sinhala ideology and the anti-colonial phase

The advent of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony can be divided into three phases:

1. The anti-colonial agitation, which took an anti-State character;
2. The post-colonial State control and domination of the State and the exercise of hegemony over minorities;
3. The post accord phase, which again assumes an anti-State character.

Historians used to comment that the political independence of Sri Lanka was achieved without violence, and without bloodshed. However, we know today that Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, obtained its independence within the shadow of the decision to grant India independence. The majority Sinhalese expressed their hostility to the British through the Buddhist revival which from its inception provided an interpretation of a country which belonged to the Sinhalese. The Buddhist revival was associated with the conception of the Sinhalese as belonging to the 'Aryan' race, and Buddhism and Sinhalese were projected as being synonymous with each other. The anti-imperialism of the Buddhist revival, therefore, was inclusive, rejecting not only the British but all 'foreign' influences in the country. The Buddhist revival was also associated with the restoration of the Buddhist texts such as the *Mahawamsa* and the *Kulawamsa*, chronicles written by the *Sangha*, where the Sinhalese and their kings are depicted as protectors of Buddhism against the evil Tamil hordes from across the Palk Straits. The concept of the Sinhalese as being engulfed and dominated by the Tamils from the north, is a continuous discourse and refrain within the Buddhist militant movement.

In what was an almost parallel development to the growth of Hindu chauvinist groups in India, by the 1930s in Sri Lanka, several communal organisations had been established. Increasingly, the Tamils in the north were agitating for a federal system of government, and expressing the need for a separate party to express their interests. The plantation workers also formed a communal organisation, allegedly upon the advice of Jawarharlal Nehru. And the Sinhalese formed the Sinhala Maba Sabha, which later was to be the political base for the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

Post-independence nation building

In the post-independence period in India, a significant leadership of the Congress tried to assert its avowedly secular roots. It began the vast task of nation building by incorporating within itself a whole range of ideological and minority persuasions. Granting full constitutional guarantees to almost all minorities and religions also created a degree of peace in the 1950s and 60s. However, Hindu nationalism was not to remain submerged for long. The worsening of Indo-Pakistani relations and the 1965 war heightened Hindu patriotism, while the patriotism of the minority community was held suspect. Muslims were described as 'Pakistani agents', for instance. These developments invariably increased suspicion and insecurity among the Muslims.

The worsening of the communal divide has also been located in the period following Nehru's death and the inability of Shastri, or soon after, Mrs. Gandhi, to provide a stable leadership to sustain intra-community dialogue and alliances.¹¹ Weak or partisan leadership through the 1960s laid the foundation for the rapid polarisation between minorities and the ruling party. It must be clarified here that the need for a strong State need not be synonymous with strong arm tactics, authoritarianism and centralisation, where for instance every assertion by a submerged or discriminated group is perceived as a law and order problem and dealt with as such. A strong and confident leadership can generate a strong State that believes and acts on principles that are quite the reverse of those cited above.

In Sri Lanka, the hegemonic assertions of the Sinhalese became apparent immediately after independence, in their attitude towards the Tamil plantation workers of Indian origin. These workers had been a source of mobilisation for the Marxist movement. Further, their work contributed to foreign exchange earnings in tea. They had enjoyed limited franchise and had voted in elections. By two Acts, the Citizenship Acts of 1949 and 1951, all these workers were de-citizenised and rendered stateless, their fate and future to be negotiated with the Indian government. The Sirima-Shastri Pact of 1966 was a culmination of protracted negotiations, where over half the workers of the plantations were to be repatriated to India. It is worth noting that apart from some protests by the Trotskyist movement and a few Tamil representatives in Parliament, the members of the Tamil community voted with the government on this question.

A significant political development was also the breakaway of the Sinhala Maha Sabha and other Sinhalese sections from the ruling United National Party, led by the late S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. The formation of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in 1952 had the explicit ambition of protecting and agitating for Sinhala interests. The party was able to gather a motley alliance, composed of Buddhist priests, village teachers, village headmen, ayurvedic doctors, and based itself on electoral support from the Sinhala peasantry. The SLFP expressed in political form the agitation of the temperance movement of the early 1920s; in ideology it proclaimed the sons of the soil, and joined in reviving myths of the golden age of the Sinhalese. The ideology and the promises of the party were to provide them with an electoral victory in 1956. The single

and symbolic slogan presented to the electorate was the promise that if elected, the party would make Sinhalese the official language within twenty four hours. This slogan played on the anti-imperialist and anti-British sentiments of the Sinhalese population. The dialectics of Sinhala chauvinism had always been anti-imperialist on one hand and anti-Tamil on the other. The promise of 'Sinhala only' put all other political parties in disarray.

With the electoral victory of the SLFP in 1956, the pursuit of Sinhalese hegemony was additionally strengthened with political power. Political power was used to introduce legislation against colonial economic interests, and to create the conditions for the Sinhalese of the State. These policies are reflected particularly in the language policy through the Sinhala Only Act, and also in other spheres such as education, employment and land colonisation. Every other Sinhalese party had to accommodate the advent of Sinhalese hegemony by adapting their policies accordingly.

The pursuit of hegemony in Sri Lanka

We need not elaborate on the subsequent evolution of the pursuit of hegemony by a weak Sinhalese bourgeoisie. This has been amply documented; instead let us draw on some interesting theoretical points. The concept of hegemony is used here to discuss the overriding and all-embracing ideological dominance over all political classes and structures during a particular historical conjuncture. In the case of Sri Lanka, the notion of this ideological dominance and hegemony must be seen in the articulation of the so-called 'Sinhala consciousness' by essentially petty bourgeois forces in the historical process. The evolution of Sinhalese consciousness has been traced by Kumari Jayawardena to the assertion of a weak and nascent merchant capitalist class in the early twentieth century.¹² Sinhala consciousness played an anti-imperialist role during the colonial period, although its hostility to other minorities, whether religious or ethnic, has been well documented.¹³ Of critical importance is not only how the ideology during the post-colonial period helped its exponents to come to political power, but that State power was used at the expense of other religious and national minorities. The incidence of discrimination leading up to the civil war today need not be exemplified here.

An important factor here is the particular pervasiveness and the all-embracing character of the petty bourgeoisie and its particular ideological manifestations in Sri Lanka. The petty bourgeoisie, whether it is Sinhalese or Tamil, would seem to be unique in comparison to other South Asian states, in so far as it is all pervasive and has influenced the dominant political currents and political formations in Sri Lanka.

This uniqueness can be attributed to many factors. It is a result of demographic factors, such as a very high proportion of those under thirty five. Also, the extent of literacy and education, if measured by secondary and university education, is higher than in any other country on the continent. Further, their level of expectations have been high, with aspirations raised towards upward mobility through the educational

system. The economic base of the country with subsistence agriculture and a weak industrial base provides little opportunity, and aspirations are high with regard to obtaining a high education and a job in the State bureaucracy. Typically, young Tamils in the north had aspired towards the medical and engineering professions, whilst the educated Sinhalese sought mobility through the State patronage system. The denial of upward mobility either through lack of jobs or through blockages in the educational system provided a strong base for political mobilisation.

The concept of hegemony must be related to the control of the State welfare policies adopted by all governments, and an inherited political system which allowed for majoritarian rule. On the one hand, the State was increasingly used to disburse patronage and welfare. Given the lack of industrialisation, the State became the major vehicle of employment. The potential for patronage has indeed been used systematically by all political parties who subsequently came to power. Further, welfare provisions, either for subsidies or higher education, became a hallmark for electoral competition. The discrimination of the Tamils, on the other hand became the second hallmark.

By 1972, discrimination against the Tamils had come full circle. In introducing the new Republican Constitution, the United Front government of 1972 offended Tamil opinion when it introduced provisions proclaiming itself as a Buddhist theocratic State. Buddhists were thus accorded a special status in the Constitution.

The transformation of the State into the hegemonic control of the Sinhalese took on its most obvious form in the recruitment to the armed forces. From 1970, there was virtually no Tamil recruitment into the armed forces. Equally significant in the transformation of the State, was the personalisation of politics. Mrs. Bandaranaike, for instance, was accused of providing leading positions in the government and the administration to members of her family. She also increasingly resorted to arbitrary rule. During her tenure the country was ruled by extensive emergency powers, and gradually the State was converted into a vehicle for the deployment of patronage. The State, composed of patron-client networks, then became a vehicle for Sinhalese chauvinism and an instrument of repression against the minority.

The contradiction between secularism and chauvinism

It is within this context that the coming to power of the United National Party (UNP) in 1977, needs to be analysed. The official policy of the UNP was to introduce an accelerated capitalist strategy of development, based on export oriented industrialisation. It was obvious that the national question had to be resolved. President Jayewardene, after discussions with Amirthalingam and Thondaman, agreed to call an All Party Conference to discuss and settle the outstanding issues facing the Tamil community. The Tamils understandably welcomed the UNP victory with unrestrained enthusiasm.

There is no doubt that strong secular tendencies, represented by mercantilist interests, were keen to come to terms with the Tamil national question. It was clear to them that peace and stability were necessary for them to pursue their economic policies. The presidential executive system (called by some as the Gaullist system), was to enable the President to pursue these goals without being hostage to parochial interests.

However, in the pursuit of its policies, the new government used a combination of stratagems to improve the conditions for capitalist growth. Firstly, using its massive majority, it rapidly dismantled the welfare system and constraints evolved through 30 years of a siege economy. Secondly, it destabilised the political opposition by a variety of methods, which included Presidential Commissions, circumventing elections and resorting to extra-parliamentary means to deal with the opposition. Thirdly, it placated a potentially hostile populace by a large dose of consumerism, which included colour televisions and other consumer durables. Fourthly, it created multiple employment patterns by creating a vast informal sector, fed by encouraging migration to the Middle East, by tourism, etc.

But it is in the methods used to deal with political opposition that the government encouraged a series of measures to promote lawlessness. Political opposition — from workers, parties, from the democratic opposition or from other nationalities — was met with resort to military and para-statal forces. These para-statal forces were gangs, primarily recruited from the Party's trade unions, and these very forces then were used against the minorities.

The pursuit of dominance and hegemony in India

In India, the 1960s saw a steady erosion of Muslim support for the Congress. The wars with Pakistan, massive riots in 1964, 1968 and 1969, a weak economy and continuing widespread hardship within the community, together with a growing inability among the Congress to accommodate the Muslim elite, all added to the alienation of the Muslims.¹⁴

However, the ideology of Hindu nationalism remained till 1980, the almost exclusive preserve of the chauvinist parties and groups whose main mobilisation thrust was the promotion of a 'pure' Hinduism and the wider establishment of Hindi as the national language. More recently, these organisations have turned against tribals and Christians as well. These groups played a crucial role in the Hinduisation process, as they were gradually able to influence the State as being its institutional legitimiser. Their propaganda, though crude, was powerfully developed and used. The political philosophy was increasingly blatant in its attitude towards non-Hindus; campaigns against Muslims (and later other communities) are graphically illustrated in leaflets which are distributed — often on the eve of violent upsurges. We may cite a

representative one distributed by one of the most popular of these groups – the Vishwa Hindu Parishad – in Maharashtra:

“There is a well planned conspiracy behind the riots continuously occurring in the country. From Morocco to Malaysia, India is the only country where Muslims are still in a minority. Therefore, constant efforts are being made to increase the Muslim population by not accepting the family planning programmes of the government, by producing more children, by keeping more than one wife and by converting Hindus to Islam. They are dreaming of installing a Muslim government in this country by taking advantage of the democratic system in India.... They are in league with Arab countries and on the strength of their petro-dollars they are trying to make Indian Muslims anti-national, to make riots through them on one or the other pretext, to instigate innocent Harijans to come in conflict with other members of the Hindu society, to convert Hindus to Islam and thus create chaos in the country. The Centre for Islamic Culture in London is directing all such activities. The plan is to make the Muslim minority in India into a majority by converting eighty million Harijans to Islam.”¹⁵

The Congress, though riddled with controversies of communal interests, generally retained a secular thrust particularly at the leadership level. This accounted for many of the swings in support of the Congress from the minority communities – particularly the Muslims and the Sikhs.

The transformation of the State

After Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in 1980, she made significant attempts to win over the increasingly powerful Hindu political factor. Ironically, it was the coalition of left, socialist and rightist parties that ruled India from 1977 to 1980, that gave national political respectability to such nationalistic groups and parties as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and allowed these primarily northern Indian formations to expand their bases to the southern states.

A clear strategy pervaded Mrs. Gandhi's policies for dealing with mass dissent and strong opposition forces. To the well-tested methods of divide and rule were added the growing use of police, paramilitary and military forces for squashing those assertions not amenable to cooption and accommodation. The result of these strategies, now coupled with a slowly coalescing Hindu nationalism within the party, was to fuel the insecurity among the minorities and traditionally marginalised communities. It also strengthened the revivalist tendencies within the minority communities. Let us quote historian Imtiaz Ahmed, in his classic essay on the rise of communalism in post-Independence India: “It is a matter of common knowledge that when a religious minority feels seriously threatened, the machinery of its faith begins

to wear out and its traditions begin to falter against those of the majority, it turns worriedly upon itself and its members cling even more intensely to its traditions.”¹⁶

Within these parallel developments in both the minority and majority communities, it is not surprising therefore, that the post-1980 period has seen the most violent and long drawn-out riots and pogroms, most either State sponsored or State abetted, since independence. It has also seen increasingly overt political alliances being formed between the Congress and Hindu right wing forces, with the RSS, with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Forum, an organisation with clear links with the RSS and with several leading Congress members among its founding members). These forces have continued to support the Congress even after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in 1984.

Another crucial development in the communalisation of the Hindu mind was the felt need in several parts of the country to have platforms for the lower classes among the Hindu community. The RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) were perceived as primarily upper-class bodies. Consequently, several new organisations have been formed to address themselves to the grievances and aspirations of the lower class Hindu. These forces have been then more effectively mobilised against lower class minorities.

Additionally, a crucial issue used to whip up communal hatred, is that members of a minority have acquired upward mobility. This serves to create feelings of animosity and competition between the lower classes. The visible affluence of the Sikhs or the relatively higher degrees of prosperity achieved by a few Muslims, as well as their higher spending on religious and social activities and the acquisition of property, are used as psychological weapons to mobilise the lower classes among the Hindus.

It is not surprising that in almost all violent conflicts a majority of those killed and injured are the poor. The mobilisation of scheduled castes against much less wealthy Muslims in three of India's most violent post-independence riots (Ahmedabad in 1982 and 1984, and Bhivandi-Bombay in 1984) or the role of scheduled castes and lower caste peasantry — from the outskirts of Delhi — in the 1984 pogrom against the Sikhs, are just a few illustrations of the ‘use’ that the poor are put to.

The role of the police, the administration and the army in communal clashes is of tremendous significance. From the 1960s onward, the army has been increasingly called in after police and the paramilitary forces failed to ‘bring a riot under control’. What this hides is that in a majority of the cases, the police and the administration acted in favour of the majority community. In a comprehensive assessment of 20 years of Hindu-Muslim clashes, historian Moin Shakir elaborates on this partisan role of State forces:

“The police personnel betray the worst kind of communalism. They fail to bring to heel known preachers of communal hatred. They are unwilling to employ all the administrative measures available to them. The Hindu communal elements are given a free hand to propagate communal hatred

without any objection from the administration... the demolition of mosques has been allowed to continue for hours in Aligarh, with the connivance of officers.... In Ranchi, the police even indulged in loot, arson and killing. The military *Jawans* (soldiers) behaved as robbers, devoid of any sense of responsibility and any trace of humanity. They become persecutors, tyrants and perpetrators of crime in a number of communal instances."¹⁷

The political mobilisation of the Hindus was coupled with widespread propagation of the notion that Sikhism or Islam or Christianity were better organised, that they had a shared text and a common God. There have thus been several efforts to present Hinduism as a unified whole – identifying the *Bhagvad Gita* as the common text, having huge rallies, more aggressively visible festivals, massive processions and the proliferation of new temples all over the country. Such demonstrations of a militant and unified Hindu identity have in turn given rise to parallel responses from the minorities and other beleaguered communities. New communal organisations have been formed, the older ones have become more fundamentalist, the chauvinists among the community are gaining greater ground – there is thus a counter demonstration of identity. It is in this context of the majoritarianisation of the State and the public mind that the Tamil and Sikh assertions need to be located.

A brief history of the Sikhs

The Sikh community are a numerical majority in Punjab. Their upward mobility, both as a consequence of the green revolution and the quality of their enterprise and hard work has been, by all counts, extraordinary. While this differentiates them from the general economic backwardness of say the Muslims, the perception of being discriminated against, of their religion being 'in danger', of facing political manipulation by the national ruling party and the authoritarian methods used by the State has significant parallels with the plight of other minorities.

In the newly constituted state of post-independence Punjab, the Sikhs were in a minority. Nearly 20 years of struggle finally led to the creation of a new state configuration – one that gave them a majority status. From 33.3 per cent after independence, they acquired a position of 60.2 per cent at the reorganisation in 1966.¹⁸ While this proportion has fluctuated due to immigration of agricultural labour – the outward migration of Sikhs as also the movements of both Hindus and Sikhs during the past decade of conflict – Sikhs nevertheless, represent more than half of Punjab's population.

The community is socially differentiated, with over 20 per cent belonging to the scheduled castes. Political power has been wielded mainly by the more dominant section of the Jat caste which comprises roughly a third of the population. Hindus and Sikhs are spread out throughout the State; except for one district with a Hindu rural

majority, Sikhs dominate the rural areas. In contrast, Hindus are in a majority in urban areas including Amritsar, the site of the legendary Golden Temple.

The per capita income in Punjab is the highest in India, but a fairly large proportion — between 25–30 per cent of the population — live below the poverty line.¹⁹ Especially significant is that in the last two decades a whole new generation of youth, educated by their upwardly mobile parents, have been unable to find employment in the cities. Punjab has remained industrially backward; thus the urban centres, though fairly developed, have a very low absorption capacity.²⁰ These young men found their way first into the Marxist–Leninist movement in the 1960s, and then into the militant student organisations which provided the gun–wielding cadre for the militant groups which have dominated Punjab politics in the 1980s.

The rise of minority nationalism

The rise of sub–nationalist awareness is relatively recent among the Sikhs. Evolving as a reformist sect of the Hindus, Sikhs have traditionally maintained close kinship and family ties with Hindus. However, at the turn of the century, sectarian formations began emphasising the distinct identity of the Sikhs and made a concerted effort to delink them from the Hindus. Several revivalist movements among the Hindus further consolidated this desire for a distinct identity. It was here that the Akalis, a group of dominant Sikh reformers, sought to establish a more unified socio–religious organisation of the community.²¹ Part of this thrust led to the formation of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), — a centralised body to manage Sikh temples, to set up new educational and social institutions and to provide substantial monetary resources to the Akalis. To extend their effectivity and control further, the Akalis entered active politics by forming the Akali Dal, which was then projected as the main guardian of Sikh interests. Religion and politics thus emerged as an integrated and unified whole.

The role of political parties

Until 1985, the Akali Party in Punjab was unable to establish electoral supremacy. Sikh votes were divided; there were several contending factions within the party, and national and aggregative parties like the Congress and the Communists significantly eroded their electoral base. The inability of the Akali Party to rise above factionalism and sectarianism has led to its becoming further embroiled in complex intra–party disputes.

The Congress Party, on the other hand, has attempted to retain political control of the State ever since independence and even after the Sikhs won their demand for a reorganisation of Punjab. The main strategy was to project the Congress as the local and national protector of the Sikhs. This rested on politically dividing Sikh unity.²² This was in tune with the intolerance Mrs. Gandhi had for non–Congress states.

Rather than work towards a genuinely decentralised federal polity, where pluralism and autonomy would be respected, she moved towards centralising her authority and control. Central to this was the imposition of one model of development and the establishment of a nationally hegemonic Congress, irrespective of the costs. While attempting to destabilise the Akali party, she was also actively engaged in toppling the governments of three other Indian states.

Mrs. Gandhi had to break the wide unity of support that the Akalis enjoyed if she was to establish the Congress in Punjab. To do this she, along with the then Chief Minister, Giani Zail Singh, and her son, Sanjay, planned the creation of a contending religious and political authority. So it was a relatively obscure Sikh priest, Sānt Bhindranwale, who was promoted. Bhindranwale had already established his militant credentials in engineering the assassination of a prominent Sikh reformer and the owner and editor of a major Hindu newspaper in Punjab. In India's leading daily, *The Times of India*, Ayesha Kagal wrote: "The irony, of course, is that the Sant was originally a product, nurtured and marketed by the Centre to cut into the Akali Dal's sphere of influence."²³

For a while, this strategy worked. Bhindranwale was projected and promoted as a counterpoint to the established Akali leadership. Significantly, he filled the space of a fundamentalist proponent of Sikh interests and concerns. Throughout the first two years, he continued to receive the support of the Congress and of Mrs. Gandhi. Crucially, within this period he was able to establish support within the Akali Dal and the SGPC. By 1983, his militant and aggressive style as the saviour of Sikh dignity and Sikh identity and his establishing a heavily armed band of fanatical supporters around him, gained him access to the inner conclave of Sikh religious and political leadership. Soon he acquired a legitimate footing within the supreme sanctuary of the Sikh religion — the Golden Temple.

The strategy to divide the Akali leadership had backfired. It had turned into a struggle against the Centre and against the moderate elements within the Sikh people.

Increasingly, the vociferousness and militancy of these demands, now projected as Akali demands, and the killings of a few prominent Hindus and Sikh dissenters, began to draw criticism from Hindus within and outside the Congress. Mrs. Gandhi was caught in a bind of her own creation.

Repressive legislation and the role of State forces

In April 1984 the central government legislated an ordinance to amend the National Security Act. Under the ordinance, anyone could be preventatively detained by the State for fifteen days without being told why he/she was being detained and without any remedy against the detention. Additionally, persons arrested before 3 April 1983, could be imprisoned for almost six months, even if the detention was found to be unjustified by the Advisory Board. This ordinance thus effectively diluted the legal safeguards available to a detainee.

Numerous arrests followed. Many of those arrested before 1983 were not released until 1986. Earlier, several laws had already been passed which severely restricted civil liberties, including legislation to gag and control the press.

The escalating militancy among the Sikhs, Hindu nationalistic responses and further militancy, finally culminated in Operation Bluestar in June 1984 – the senselessly violent military action to flush out the monster of Mrs. Gandhi's own creation from the precincts of the Golden Temple. The main dome of the temple was destroyed, the sacred library reduced to ashes. For the first time in post-independence history, the sanctity of one religion's highest seat had been violated by the State.

It has been argued that this action was inevitable and necessary if Bhindranwale and his armed militants were to be controlled.²⁴ However, all along there were political solutions. But rather than seek wider State and national level support for these solutions, Mrs. Gandhi and the Indian State embarked on a political path whose culmination in uncontrollable militancy and violence was inevitable. With Operation Bluestar, the flames of militancy were fanned higher. The widening of the base for 'extremism' and 'terrorism' was then only a short step away.

Soon after Operation Bluestar, the government began a systematic operation to 'flush' out terrorists from all over Punjab. A new amendment to the National Security Act was passed on 21 June, 1984, and three weeks later, the third ordinance, the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance, gave sweeping powers to the State, reducing even further the rights of detenus. Significantly, it was promulgated ten days before Parliament was to sit. The noted Indian jurist, V.M. Tarkunde, expressed grave concern, commenting on the first two amendments: "Both these amendments are *prima facie* invalid and are liable to be challenged as unconstitutional. In any case, they involve a serious encroachment on personal freedom."²⁵

The national daily, *The Statesman*, remarked in an editorial: "The gay abandon with which the Central Government has been accumulating extraordinary powers makes one wonder whether in the not too distant future anything will be left of the normal law of the land."²⁶ And further:

"The indiscriminate resort to the ordinance-making power itself shows scant regard for democratic norms and a tendency to go by the letter rather than the spirit of the Constitution. To come out with ordinances when a parliamentary session is not far off, or even adjourning the legislature, as some States do, in order to issue ordinances, is a curious commentary on our parliamentary practice."²⁷

The pro-government *Hindustan Times* remarked in an editorial:

"... alarmingly the legislation would have nationwide application. The security forces would now be armed with unprecedented power to detain an individual. For example, under the Terrorist-Affected Areas Bill, the onus of proof has shifted from the accuser on to the accused; moreover a 'terrorist' is defined so

vaguely that an individual need not have necessarily indulged in violence to attract the penalising eye of the legislation. What it simply adds up to is that if the Government, in its unquestionable discretion, declares any part of the country as terrorist-affected, any individual in the area can be arrested on mere suspicion and it would be for that unfortunate detenu to establish his innocence. Moreover, under the National Security (Amendment) Bill an individual can be arrested again and again on the same grounds. Furthermore, police officials are absolved of the time-honoured obligation of being specific in their charges while detaining an individual. The expanse of the new powers of detention is disturbing.... Armed with such enormous power, a government — any government — is tempted to use such laws against its political opponents.”²⁸

By the imposition of these laws, all the people of Punjab and, by the third ordinance, the whole country, were deprived of rights guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. A detailed investigation was carried out by the People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) in March 1985, to ascertain the impact of these laws and whether they were effective in terms of their stated objectives. The PUDR concluded: “not only were the laws ineffective with regard to their stated purpose but worse, they are helping further communal terrorism. This is a consequence of the anti-democratic nature of the laws and the wide scope they provide for their arbitrary and indiscriminate application.”²⁹

Numerous indiscriminate arrests were made by both the army and the police. The report goes on to say that the information collected “points to the widespread use of torture, fabrication of evidence, severe harassment of families of which male members were missing or absconding. The use of these laws often lead to settling personal scores or to teach any one who dared to voice any protest against the anti-democratic laws and procedures.”³⁰

The report reveals that post mortem reports state that some of those killed had their hands tied behind their backs. A number of other case studies point to the unjustified misuse of the army’s powers. In conclusion, the report states:

“The extraordinary powers bestowed on the Army, the police and the courts have resulted in alienating the people, breeding resentment and creating discontent. Also since the principal target in the implementation of the laws are members of the Sikh community, we feel that it has further vitiated the relationships among different communities. The laws have not only failed in their stated objective, but have created an atmosphere of terror among ordinary citizens.”³¹

The promulgation and misuse of such legislation blocks all channels of legitimate protest and dissent, thus throttling those very forces of democratic and secular opinion which can best combat communalism and help restore normalcy.

Earlier, on 15 October 1983, the Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Ordinance was promulgated, becoming an Act two months later. The armed forces, through a legislation that is now a permanent part of the Indian statute book, acquired extraordinary powers and their activities now had legal sanction. Under sections of the Act, even junior officers have vast powers to search, seize and arrest people at any time of the day or night, without warrant. Even a non-commissioned officer has the power to shoot someone on the mere suspicion that he may disturb public order. A person tortured by the army or unjustifiably detained has no recourse to the law courts. For, as section 7 of the Act lays down, "No prosecution, suit or other legal proceeding shall be instituted, except with the previous permission of the central government, against any person in respect of anything done or purported to have been done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act."

A representative case of the methods used by the police was exposed when Justice S.S. Sodhi, a vigilance judge, visited the Central Jails in two major Punjab towns – Patiala and Nabha. During his visit, people complained of torture. He directed an enquiry and his Report states:

"Their statements reveal two common modes of torture, one is the use of extra thick pestle-like mini-logs which is placed on the thighs of the detenu with one person or two persons standing on it. The detenu is made to lie on the floor prostrate or supine. The pestle with load thereon is then rotated over the thighs The second mode of torture which is described to be more painful consists of stretching the legs apart to an unbearable extent. The legs on reaching a particular angle cause acute pain which on persistence results in swooning."³²

The police in India have long played partisan roles and have been responsible for innumerable illegal and unlawful acts. The power of the landed elites and the new urban elites have perpetuated their political manipulation for sectarian or other partisan ends. There has been a substantial increase in the police and para military forces in the last decade – most of it in the armed sections of these forces. Several new bodies have been formed and the intelligence operations have been considerably reorganised and expanded. Additionally the army has been called in increasingly to intervene in internal conflict. The justification through 1983 and 1984 for the increase in the size and resource allocation of these forces, was the continuing violence in Punjab which by now had spread to other parts of north India, particularly to Delhi which has the highest concentration of Sikhs outside Punjab.³³

The pogroms

The character and intensity of modern pogroms reflect the extent of lawlessness existing in South Asia. Various terms have been used to characterise inter-ethnic

violence in South Asia. Linguistic usage has evolved to include partly ideological concepts such as 'communal disturbances' or 'communal riots' or 'religious or ethnic riots', implying that the violence so manifest in such events is a conflict between two communities or groups. Further, the implication is that the 'riot' is something sporadic, something spontaneous; and newspapers provide these events an episodic form. Further, these concepts suggest that the event is an isolated incident and not a normal pattern in everyday society. There is thus no hint of the structural continuity and the variety of actors who are involved in these 'riots', particularly the role of the State or sections of the State.

The pattern of communal riots has been changing. New and important factors that have some bearing have emerged. The riots of the late 1960s set a trend in which economic and political issues predominated as important causes, even though these were disguised under the garb of communalism. Some components characteristic of modern pogroms can be identified as follows: minorities are seen as political threats, plainly in numerical terms, and the entire community is attacked for acts of terrorism perpetrated on members of the majority community. The concept of collective punishment is evoked. In all cases merchants and traders are involved in instigation, preparing lists of competitors, and in financing attacks. Present are a large number of lumpen proletariat, who act as the advance guard for looting and scavenging. The most significant point, however, is that these types of riots are mostly pre-planned and to some extent centrally directed from sections of the ruling political party and with covert assistance of parts of the State apparatus, particularly its law enforcement agencies.

The pogrom against the Sikhs

On 31 October 1984, Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated. Within hours, mobs were on the rampage, primarily in the area around the hospital where she was taken. By the next day, the violence had spread throughout the city and over the next 60 hours, Sikh property was systematically destroyed and thousands of Sikhs brutally murdered. The police and the administration were, at best, ineffective: eye witness accounts point to police participation in the violence in several parts of the city. By the time the killings stopped, official estimates placed the number killed at over 3,000.

Three major independent investigations were launched. The most widely acknowledged was carried out by two of India's leading human rights groups, the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR). Their report concluded that, "the attacks on members of the Sikh community in Delhi and its suburbs, far from being a spontaneous expression of 'madness' and of popular 'grief' and 'anger' at Mrs Gandhi's assassination as made out to be by the authorities, were the outcome of a well organised plan marked by acts of both deliberate commissions and omissions by important politicians of the Congress-I at the top and by authorities in the administration."³⁴

The two other reports, one by the Citizens for Democracy and the other by senior retired civil servants who formed the Citizen's Commission, corroborated that the killings "were not spontaneous but cleverly thought out and systematically executed."³⁵

The anti-Tamil pogroms of 1983

Organised riots, or communal riots as they are frequently called, are no strangers to Sri Lanka. The first such event of some significance refers to the anti-Muslim riots organised by Sinhalese trading interests in 1915. The next outburst of large scale violence was in 1958. There was a change in the character of the violence. Tarzie Vittachi, quoting the then Governor General's statement that the riots of 1958 were spontaneous, disagrees with him and suggests that these events were to some extent pre-planned:

"News trickled out from Queen's House that the Governor General had announced off the record at a press conference, that the riots had not been spontaneous. What he said was: 'Gentlemen, if any of you have an idea that this was a spontaneous outburst of communalism, you can disabuse your mind of it. This is the work of a master mind who has been at the back of the people who have planned this carefully and knew exactly what they were doing. It was a time-bomb set about two years ago which has now exploded.'³⁶

From July 1977 to 1983, Sri Lanka witnessed frequent attacks on the Tamil speaking communities. Pogroms were reported in 1977, 1981, and massive violence in July 1983.

The spark which precipitated the violence in July was provided when 13 Sinhalese soldiers were killed in an ambush by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite the vigorous press censorship imposed on all information relating to terrorist activity in the north, this incident was given immediate and maximum publicity in the government press, radio and television.

The bodies of the dead soldiers were brought to Colombo and the funeral was to be conducted with maximum government display. These events provided the basis for a massive attack on Tamils. Eye witness reports provide a vivid and terrible picture of the unfolding violence which continued to escalate for more than ten days in Sri Lanka:

"Sri Lanka's capital city for most of last fortnight looked like it had been taken by a conquering army. Street after street lay empty to the gaze, although the dawn-to-dusk curfew had been lifted, and small, watchful groups of Sinhalese dotted the sidewalks, providing flesh and blood counterpoints to the hundreds of burnt-out shops and factories and homes that lined the once bustling markets and roads. The arson was professional. Charred shells fallen in on themselves, with blackened signboards announcing Tamil

ownership hanging askew, here and there a liquor shop with hundreds of broken bottles littering the floor."³⁷

The violence rapidly spread from Colombo to the outskirts, and on to the Central Province, culminating in attacks on Tamil plantation workers, and shops and trading houses of Tamils in the highlands. What was clear was the planned and premeditated nature of the attacks, particularly the systematic attempt to undermine the material existence of the Tamil community living in the south.

Over-determination of ethnicity

As it was argued earlier, the mercantilist forces within the government were interested in solving the national question, if only to provide for stability to pursue their economic programme. But it was precisely when it attempted to solve the national question through the calling of an all-party conference, that violence against the Tamil minority assumed a massive scale. Sections within the ruling party representing petty bourgeois Sinhalese interests were hostile to an accommodation and attempted to pre-empt this accommodation by encouraging pogroms. Generally, these forces acted within the State apparatus and used the ideological and security apparatus as a cover for their activities. There are extensive reports of the police and army encouraging and taking part in the violence. The Sansoni Commission suggests that ethnic considerations have now become a major factor in the minds of security personnel, preventing them from acting firmly in an explosive situation and in the midst of such 'riots'.

Not only was police and army misbehavior with regard to the civilian population encouraged, no attempts were made to punish those guilty of such offences. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that with the events of 1983, there was planning, organisation and execution over a very wide area. Indeed, that these events were centrally planned, co-ordinated and engineered was repeated even by the government press. There is also evidence of massive connivance of politicians in power, including several cabinet ministers. Also merchants had a strong role to play in providing material support for organised gangs, in providing lists of competitors, etc. It was alleged that organised gangs had been provided with lists of Tamil addresses and Tamil shops and business houses by members within the government.³⁸

Counter-violence was initiated by the tactics adopted by the guerilla movement in the north, with selective assassinations, sophisticated hit and run tactics, the deliberate use of tactics to provoke attacks on civilian targets. All this meant a sense of insecurity for both communities.

The structure of violence which erupted and its impact on different sectors of society suggests a new phase in the over-determination of ethnicity in Sri Lanka. What the 1983 events suggest is therefore a conjuncture of elements fuelling each other, legitimising the use of violence in general and the use of violence against the Tamil community in particular.

In summary, we could say that the spiral of violence and counter violence were encouraged by both sides through the adoption of a variety of politico-military stratagems. On the part of the government it came in the form of: (1) The application of military methods to resolve a political problem; (2) The sanction of reprisal killings of civilian population; (3) The encouragement of gross human rights violations including torture, extra-judicial killings, and arbitrary arrests with no lawful procedures and with no commissions of inquiry; (4) The formation of armed security personnel and mercenaries ranging from Home Guards, Special Task Forces, Green Tigers and other illegal and semi-legal private armies to deal with the political opposition. The Tamils reacted by: (1) Choosing military methods such as land mines and booby traps which were also partly intended to invite reprisals against civilians; (2) Indiscriminate killings of civilians; (3) Elimination of all opposition within and outside the armed militant movement.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord

The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord represents a departure in the protracted social conflict in Sri Lanka. The agreement must be seen as an attempt at a political and military solution to the conflict. It shows the failure of the government of Sri Lanka to solve the national question, through a mixture of political and military stratagems. It draws attention to the lack of conflict regulation mechanisms within the internal political process in Sri Lanka. The two-track policy of the government was to pursue political negotiation for the devolution of power while forcing the guerilla movement to negotiations through military means, including economic blockades of the Jaffna peninsula. Attempts by President Jayewardene to seek client status with the USA (including attempts to join the ASEAN group) or even to generalise an anti-Indian concord with Pakistan and China, failed.

Further, as President Jayewardene had stated on many occasions, the cost of conducting the war was draining massive resources. To a country dependent on foreign aid, international criticism of the conduct of the war could have repercussions on aid for the future. Dissent and political opposition to the government were also building up in the south. There was the danger that the civil war which had been restricted to one part of the country would become a generalised civil war against the entire regime. The Accord therefore provided Jayewardene with the necessary political elbowroom to confront the southern question. From the viewpoint of the Indian government, however, the Accord signaled recognition of India's regional hegemony in the southern zone of South Asia.

With regard to the Tamil national question, Delhi had pursued a dual track policy, sometimes confusing in its complexity. After the 1983 pogroms, the Indian government intervened directly as a third party concerned with the settlement of the dispute within the unitary State of Sri Lanka. It encouraged several conferences leading up to the 19 December proposals. On the other hand, the Indian State was

arming sections of the militant movement, providing them with training and base facilities, while attempting to control the direction of the militant movement by encouraging dependence and subservience to the geo-political concerns of Delhi.

This double track policy, however, was not realisable since India could not get the main guerilla movement to abide by the 19 December proposals. Further, geo-political considerations would have been a major imperative for signing the agreement. After all, Sri Lanka was now a potential base for external forces, where India had noted with concern the presence of Israeli intelligence and specialised training activities, the Pakistan government's assistance in training the Sinhalese army, as well as the presence of various foreign mercenaries on the island. Furthermore, the militarisation of the conflict would have other repercussions, not only in south India, but also, by its demonstration effect, in other parts of India.

However, the Accord has serious implications for the Sinhalese hegemonic State. The preamble to the Accord recognises the Sri Lankan State as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society. This is a fundamental departure from the concept of Sri Lanka as a Buddhist theocratic State as sanctified in the Republican Constitution of 1972. This qualitative shift of emphasis, from one based on Sinhalese hegemony to a liberal democratic State based on a multi-ethnic plural society, with substantive devolution of power to the Tamil speaking people, requires major changes in State structure: i.e. the recognition of federalism as a legitimate political structure. It also requires restructuring the economic system, so that the plantation estate system can be reformed to accept the Tamil plantation workers with full citizenship rights.

The Accord, with its passage in Parliament, and the obligations of India, means that Sinhalese chauvinist forces which had enjoyed State power now become anti-State forces opposed to the liberal democratic experiment. The presence of over 70,000 Indian troops encourages and provides legitimacy to anti-State forces, drawing on their deep rooted fears of the 'threat from the north' and helps to mobilise the sub-nationalist assertions of the Sinhalese. Hostility to the liberal democratic conception is evident in the spate of assassinations and other forms of terror and selective killings now being used by forces opposed to the Accord. A situation is rapidly developing where the State has a writ neither in the north nor in the south.

Whether a fragile and defective State, fueled by Sinhalese chauvinist ideology and bound by merchant capital, would be able to affect the transition to a multi-ethnic society, is a question to be answered in the immediate future. What is clear, however, is that political structures and institutions have to be evolved for sub-nationalist claims to be accommodated.

The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord would define the major framework for the resolution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The implication manifest in the Accord, however, is that 'internal conflicts' within the region are a security concern for the Indian State, and all efforts would be made to arrive at accords wherever there are threats to regional stability.

Notes

1. Some of the common features are, however, well known. These include: i) The recruitment of the so-called martial tribes into the regular army of the British administration; ii) Giving preferential treatment to minorities in the civil administration of the country; iii) Militarily dealing with assertions where they could not be successfully manipulated; iv) Supporting and utilising traditional landed elites to sustain control over underprivileged minorities and classes; v) Providing preferential treatment to some merchants and traders at the expense of the others; and vi) Encouraging the spread of Christianity and the English language at the expense of the local religions and languages and cultures. During the period of colonial consolidation, inter-ethnic rivalry was latent, sometimes manifesting itself in sporadic riots, but in general sub-nationalist assertions were subsumed under the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles.
2. SIPRI Yearbook 1987: World Armaments and Disarmament, Oxford University Press, New York, Ch.6.VI, pp. 138-141.
3. See Rajni Kothari, "Communalism: The New Free of Indian Democracy," Lokayan Bulletin, Vol.3, No.3, 1985.
4. Bill Warren, Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism, Verso, London, 1980.
5. Edward Azar, "Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions," in Edward Azar, E. Burton, W. John, (eds.), International Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice, Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex 1984, p.28.
6. ibid., p.36.
7. For a fascinating yet disturbing history of the Muslim League see W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis, Victor, London, 1946 (reprinted New Delhi, Manohar, 1979). See also Harbans Mukhia, "Communalism: A Study in Historical Perspective," Social Scientist, 1, August 1972.
8. Bipin Chandra, Communalism in India, Sage, New Delhi, 1984.
9. ibid.
10. Asghar Ali Engineer, (ed.), Introduction, Communal Riots in Post-Independence India, Sangam Books, Hyderabad, 1984.
11. Imtiaz Ahmed, "Secular State, Communal Society," Economic and Political Weekly, Special Number, July 1969. See also Peter B. Mayer, "Tombs and Dark Houses: Ideology, Intellectuals and Proletarians in the Study of Contemporary Islam," in Imtiaz Ahmed, (ed.), Modernisation and Social Change Among Muslims in India, Manohar, New Delhi, 1983.
12. Kumari Jayawardena, "The National Question and the Left Movement in Sri Lanka," in Charles Abeysekera, Newton Gunasinghe, (eds.), Facets of Ethnicity in Sri Lanka, Social Scientists Association, Colombo, 1987, pp. 226-271.
13. ibid.
14. Ratna Naidu, The Communal Edge to Plural Societies, Vikas, New Delhi, 1980. See also N.C. Saxena, "Nature and Origin of Communal Riots in India," in A.A. Engineer, (ed), op.cit.
15. Pamphlet distributed on the eve of a riot in the State of Maharashtra in 1981. Similar literature is distributed in the millions by chauvinist groups though the Hindu literature is far more pervasive and influential.
16. Imtiaz Ahmed, op.cit.
17. Moin Shakir, "An Analytical View of Communal Violence," in A.A. Engineer, (ed.): op.cit.
18. Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 1983, and Census of India, 1971.
19. G.S. Bhalla, Y. Alagh, "Green Revolution and the Small Peasant: A Study of Income Distribution - Part II," Economic and Political Weekly, May 22, 1982.
20. S.S. Gill; K.C. Singhal, "The Punjab Problem: Its Historical Roots," Economic and Political Weekly, April 7, 1984. See also Victor S. de Souza "Economy, Caste, Religion and Population Distribution: An Anatomy of Communal Tensions in Punjab," Economic and Political Weekly, 8 May 1982. Several studies on the impact of structural and economic imbalances make this point forcefully. See S.S. Grewal, R.S. Rangji, "Imbalances in Growth of Punjab Agriculture," in R.S. Johar, J.S. Khanna, (eds.): Studies in Punjab Economy, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1983. This collection

- contains other well documented cases which reinforce this. See particularly those by K.S. Gill, "Agricultural Development of Punjab," and R.S. Johar, J.S. Khanna, P.S. Raikhy, "Industrial Development of Punjab: A Study in Characterisation, Case For and Constraints."
21. Substantive documentation exists on the revivalist movement among Hindus and its impact on Sikh consciousness. See Surjit S. Dulai, "Punjab Language, Intelligentsia and Social Changes," in Yogendra K. Malik, (ed.), South Asia Intellectuals and Social Change, Heritage, New Delhi, 1982. On the emergence and role of the Akalis in Punjab, see Harish K. Puri, "The Akali Agitation: An Analysis of Socio-Economic Bases of Protest," Economic and Political Weekly, 22 January, 1983; also Paul Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, and Vikas, New Delhi, 1974; Baldev Raj Nayar, Minority Politics in Punjab, Princeton University Press, 1966. A more detailed history of the Akalis is available in K.C. Gulati, The Akalis Past and Present, Ashanjanak Publishers, Delhi, 1974; and Mohinder Singh, The Akali Movement, Macmillan, 1978.
 22. Samata Era Editorial Committee: "Army Action in Punjab," Samata Era, New Delhi, 1985. See also Kuldip Nayar, Khuswant Singh, The Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and After, Vision Books, New Delhi, 1984; and Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, Amritsar, Rupa Books, New Delhi, and Pan Books, London, 1985.
 23. Ayesha Kagal, Times of India, 12 September 1982.
 24. Several commentaries in the influential national press representing a wide range of perspectives – justified the army action. In fact several of them had been clamouring for such an action for almost a year.
 25. Black Laws in Punjab, People's Union for Civil Liberties, Delhi, 1985.
 26. ibid.
 27. ibid., S. Sahay, Editorial, The Statesman, quoted in Black Laws, note 26.
 28. ibid., Editorial, The Hindustan Times, quoted in Black Laws, note 26.
 29. ibid.
 30. ibid.
 31. ibid.
 32. S.S. Sodhi, Enquiry Report on the Conditions in the Patiala and Nabha Jails, mimeo, 1985.
 33. David Bayley, writing on the police in India, in "The Police and Political Order in India," Asian Survey, Vol. xxiii, No. 4, April 1983, commented, "Many people, police officers among them, began to feel that India was developing a dual system of justice – one through the formal channels of the criminal justice system and the other through political channels." Further "Politicians see the police as critical arbiters of personal as well as group advancement. Order and justice are not rights that everyone may enjoy; they are benefits that government must allocate among competing claimants."
 34. Who are the Guilty?, People's Union for Civil Liberties and People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi, 1984.
 35. Report to the Nation: The Truth About the Delhi Violence, Citizens for Democracy, Delhi, 1985; and Sikri Commission Report, 1985.
 36. Tarzie Vittachi, Emergency 58: The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots, Andre Deutch Ltd., 1958, p.79.
 37. India Today, 31 August 1983.
 38. India Today, 31 August 1983; Also The Guardian, September 1983.

14

By way of a conclusion ... and a beginning

Lawrence Surendra

“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to take a beginning
The end is where we start from.” –T.S.Eliot¹

This book is in one sense a culmination, in another it is the first step and a beginning. It is a culmination and a coming together of different collective processes that have taken place over a period of time. Neither of these have been unified by any single perspective, nor have they emerged out of any single agreed analysis. What has united and brought them together is not only a deep dissatisfaction with the contemporary social, economic, political and cultural processes, but also an attempt to speak and search for a new value-based order built on respect for nature, humanism, justice, and peace.

Though the organisational context within which this project was carried out is just a footnote, it also provides some signposts to the different collective processes referred to above. The book is a product of an ongoing project on ‘Ethnicity and Social Transformation’, carried out within the organisational context of the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA), which provided the infrastructure, both intellectual and practical, for carrying out the project. The Founding Consultation of ARENA had recognised ‘ethnicity’* as one important area of concern.

* The term ‘ethnicity’ is used here in the same broad conceptual sense (explained in the introduction), and as a kind of shorthand or telegraphic term, in which it has been used throughout the book.

The Founding Consultation of ARENA in July 1980 had concluded:

“Decolonisation in the Third World has brought about new States; it did not, however, create new nations, especially when State boundaries were arbitrarily fixed by colonial powers, grouping together a mosaic of different ethnic and cultural groups within new legal and political frameworks. Since political independence, many of these new States have been shaken by unceasing communal violence, riots and civil war caused by cultural and ethnic conflicts. The quest for independence and self-determination, once at the heart of the nationalist struggle against colonialism, has been taken up by parochial groups who ask for local autonomy, self-government or independence. An era of ‘sub-nationalism’ has come about – the political and territorial integrity of many new States is being challenged and the very concept of the nation-state as an appropriate and viable form of social organisation is questioned.

“While self-determination appears as a legitimate claim to ethnic minorities, the leadership of new States perceive it as a major stumbling block to national development and even as a threat to the integrity of the State. National integration – the forging of a common identity and loyalty among the State’s population – is considered a basic component of modernisation and development. Thus, in the eyes of the national leadership, ‘sub-nationalist’ claims could provide foreign powers with the pretext and opportunity to intervene and may become a major source of conflict among neighbour States.

“In both capitalist and socialist schools of thought, it was supposed that ethnic antagonisms will fade away in the course of development. Proponents of capitalist development hold that the integrative force of ‘modernisation’, propelled by industrialisation and economic growth, will lead to the disintegration of parochial groups. Uprooted from their primary identification, the individual will be subsequently reintegrated into a homogeneous society within the national framework. Socialist theoreticians advocate that the advent of socialism will bring an end to ethnic antagonisms where nationalism, as an expression of bourgeois aspirations, will lose its force and relevance. Socialism will, therefore, weld together the working people of all nationalities irrespective of ethnic or cultural differences.

“In practice neither of these two paths of development, applied in Asia for nearly thirty years, have been able to entirely solve traditional ethnic contradictions nor prevent new ones from developing. Capitalist development, promoted in most countries, while leading to a partial disintegration of parochial groups in the core areas of economic growth, has also brought about an increase in regional inequality and a polarisation of social classes. As social stratification has often followed ethnic lines, tension and conflicts among ethnic groups have tended to revive.”²

In the years that followed, the above analysis in relation to Asia seemed to have been telling in more ways than one. The most telling has been in the case of Sri Lanka. But even in Sri Lanka, the ethnic issue and the attendant crisis was only a violent manifestation of a deeper and fundamental crisis, that of the crisis of development. As a matter of fact, the beginning of the 1980s saw, in most countries of the region, a very severe and deepening crisis of development, which generated intense conflicts and corresponding cycles of violence.

For instance, the Marcos regime in the Philippines under an intensified legitimisation crisis, spawned a growing resistance to its rule, a resistance that was becoming more and more broad-based and cutting across different sections of Filipino society. It included not only the armed resistance of the communist insurgents and the Muslim separatists fighting for an independent State on the island of Mindanao, but also tribals trying to protect ancestral land, the struggle of the rural poor who were increasingly being impoverished, and the middle classes whose disaffection with the regime grew with the growing economic crisis.

The resistance met with increasing militarisation and repression. Many were killed or disappeared as a result of State-sponsored violence. Among the killings that galvanised the people further in their struggle was that of the Kalinga chieftan, Macliing Dulag, in April 1980, who was in the forefront of a violent and fierce opposition to the World Bank-backed Chico River Dam project that would encroach on Kalinga ancestral lands. The other was Senator Aquino, assassinated in August 1983, as he tried to return to the Philippines from exile in the US. Events thereafter brought about the overthrow of Marcos in February 1986. Political changes that have occurred since continue to affect the future direction of Philippine society, a society still not entirely out of its fundamental crisis, the crisis of development.

I have dwelt on the Philippines at some length, it is only because that country most dramatically encapsulated the extended crisis of development that almost all of the countries in Asia were facing from the beginning of the 1980s onwards. The Kwangju riots of May 1980 in South Korea and the massacre of civilians who participated in the protests in Kwangju; the hanging of Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the emergence of military rule in Pakistan; the genocide of Tamils that occurred in July 1983 in Sri Lanka; the Indian army's storming of the Sikh's Golden Temple in Amritsar to flush out Sikh separatists provoking the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in November 1984, in turn resulting in the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi, all these were a some of the dramatic events that briefly dominated the headlines while the underlying crisis of development and the conflicts that it engendered continued.

It was a foreboding of this impending development crisis that also led the Founding Consultation of ARENA in July 1980, to state: "The increasing intensity of the crises in Asia demands more than ever a creative forum through which concerned scholars from various social strata can continually exchange ideas, share experiences and lessons, and critically analyse alternative perspectives for social change." It is such

an approach that made it possible in this project to allow for the plurality of perspectives, analytical frames and differing intellectual points of view to be put across and shared. It is also such an approach that precluded the examination of such a vital issue as ethnicity from a purely academic standpoint. To be sure, this volume, as one product of the project, has a strong element of an intellectual discourse, but this is not to be equated with an academic discourse. As we have tried to show so far, the organisational context, the origins of the project and the social rootedness of the contributors, automatically ruled out a purely academic discourse.

Apart from the objective circumstances and parameters of the project and the book, there was also a further conscious element, namely through the project process, including work on the book, to set the stage for more meaningful and creative contributions in the area of ethnic tensions and conflicts in Asia, with a view to finding short term and long term solutions to this crisis.

It is with the latter concern in mind that a symposium of the contributors to the project was organised in Delhi in January 1988. This symposium constituted another collective process. If the Founding Consultation of ARENA constituted one collective process, the network of scholars, action researchers, that have interacted in the work of ARENA in the past decade, constitute a second and on-going collective process.

These two collective processes, which cannot be really separated, have provided the intellectual setting and made real the possibility of a multi-disciplinary approach to study, analyse and deal with the "social, economic, political, ethnic and cultural specificities that have been written into the nature of historical developments that have taken place in Asia." It is in the richness of such a setting that a sub-collective began its work nearly three years ago.

In attempting to carry out a study and interaction process on 'Ethnicity and Social Transformation', it was decided that in terms of methodology the process, as a first step, would work concretely through the preparation of a book. The sub-collective, then in effect becoming an editorial group, drew up a framework or proposals on the basis of which a core of participants, who would also become contributors to the book, were identified. With the identification of the contributors, through discussions between the editorial group and the contributors, a broad structure for the book was drawn up and the specific area with which each contribution would deal was agreed. It was visualised that at the end of a certain period of interactions among the contributors as also between the contributors and the editorial group, a symposium would be held. This symposium was to include, in addition to the authors, a certain number of participants concerned with the issues that the book was trying to address.

The study process benefited from other interactions such as the United Nation University Asian Perspectives Project. One of the contributions to the project from the UNU-South East Asian Perspectives Project, Cluster on Popular Movements. Participants to the Delhi symposium included some who were part of the UNU South

Asian Perspectives Project, including the UNU–UNDP Interaction Programme for Senior Action Researchers in South Asia. The Delhi symposium therefore, was a very rich and rewarding exercise. It is very difficult in this brief concluding section to capture all the interactions in Delhi and convey it adequately. What we will attempt is to convey the salient points that emerged and the kind of models under which the discussions could be subsumed. The discussion did also dwell on the matter of solutions to the conflicts and tensions that plague Asian societies. These were more in the nature of looking at some way forward than to arrive at prescriptions to the problems. It would have been presumptuous to try to do so.

The symposium found it necessary to look at the very terminology we use in looking at problems of ethnicity and the violence it generates. There was a recognition of the inadequacy of the conceptual notions and frames used, the limitations or even the inability of the knowledge systems at hand – both what we have inherited and what we have tried to fashion in order to come to grips with issues such as ethnicity. The very nature of the participants, their backgrounds and histories, in a sense made such a discussion inevitable. They did not see themselves as just observers, or academic analysts, but as those who analysed and spoke from a perspective of engagement, concern and involvement.

The issues related to ethnicity, in the view of one participant, were to be looked at from different perspectives – not just political and economic. This was to be done not only by going beyond conventional social science perspectives, but to critique these conventional perspectives as being part of the problem. This raised the issue of the role, place and problem of intellectual discourse in relation to actual problems and how the discourse, in interactions organised around the study, recognised the centrality of action paradigms.

Another participant pointed to three different running strands in the attempt to look at the problem of ethnicity and its interactions. One was the attempt to get out of the limitations of views imposed by the inadequacy of the terms used such as ‘communalism’, ‘ethnicity’, etc. Second was the discussions that pointed to how even as ‘involved’, ‘concerned’ or ‘engaged’ observers, what we witness is a tragedy. We see the failure of certain aspirations. We held ‘pluralism’ as a major belief is not holding out and we are living with explosive situations.

Thirdly, while it may be easy (the danger is there) to come to conclusions intellectually on a wide range of issues, there was a felt necessity, a constant reminder, that there should be a focus. An objective not only in terms of how to ‘live’ with explosive situations, but in terms of solutions.

The discussions also centred on the enmeshed relation between ‘development’ and ‘violence’. Elites that have been part of the problem do not want to, never have, and cannot look at the root of the problem. It was categorically stated that whenever ‘development’ takes place, there is always violence. In capitalist development violence manifests itself in ethnic and communal forms. In socialist development perhaps other

forms. The question, therefore was, what are the ways of ensuring justice when groups aggressively assert their identity? Ensuring justice may mean that the problem cannot be solved, but perhaps the degree to which it can be changed is important.

Another response was that the central question was violence, and while violence takes different forms, what is necessary to stress is that the State is associated with this violence. This brought up the issue of 'minority identities', consciousness and the State. One position was that there have always been 'minority identities'; this was challenged, and a view put forward that 'minority' depends on whose side we are talking from. Minority becomes a homogenous category, it was pointed out, that also glosses over class differentiations and domination within minorities and in society as a whole. Therefore it was not sufficient to talk of minority identities. It is important to locate 'minority consciousness' or 'ethnic consciousness'.

The counter response to the criticism of the term 'minority identity' and the use of it as a homogenous category was that 'minority identity' was a perception. The stress was to recognise this perception and understand the kind of perception. It is necessary to see how realities are being perceived before you talk about the solution. With reference to the State and how it treats, perceives and uses 'minority identity', should be seen as a reaction of the State, which does not operate in a vacuum.

The discussion on minority identities, consciousness and the State brought forth one comment that there is the danger of getting 'hung up' with the concept of ethnicity. Over and above all the factors associated with ethnic and communal problems, there is political consciousness that unites them. A common theme is: "We are being discriminated against", and when you fight against it, you are hit. The problems of a particular minority is posed not because of 'ethnicity', but because of the way the State deals with it.

It is not only a question of how people 'perceive', but how these perceptions are emerging not only in Asia, but the Third World and beyond the Third World. When a major social problem presents itself, the State 'ethnicises' it and tries to divide the social problem and attempts to control it through concession and co-optation. It is not simply a question of solution or categories, but how to encapsulate the problem. What the State is doing is to 'brutalise', thus creating various types of insecurities and attempting at the same time to make people accept it. In such a context we have to talk of a perspective and how to arrive at it.

The focus on evolving a perspective turned the discussion to the differences of approach and analysis among the participants, but also the underlying commonality. One participant pointed out that evolving a common perspective is not to be identified with arriving at a theoretical paradigm for the whole of Asia. It was important to work towards theoretical paradigms while recognising the dominance of those that come largely from the West.

In terms of evolving common perspectives, the question was posed as to why the State ethnicised social problems. We tend to look at the State as a rational agent, but the State does not behave rationally and it was crucial to discuss the relational forms

between State and people, apart from the types of State in relation to capital. Looking at State responses to problems engendered in the processes of development was one way of looking at the relational forms. A distinctive conclusion to be drawn was that State elites have evolved a security map as one crucial element for repression as a major response.

The repressive response, it was felt, heightened conflicts side by side with the erosion of democratic processes. A question was posed as to whether making the restoration of democratic processes a key agenda would bring us to square one and whether this might help address the problem of ethnicity. To this a question was raised as to whether one can talk of democratic processes without any qualification. It was felt that in the present game of democracy, democratic process could merely mean a numbers game. How is autonomy to be handled in a real sense and democratisation to be related to the autonomy of minorities and marginalised people? It was stressed that we cannot talk of democratic processes without talking of a higher degree of justice and participation. At the same time, it had to be recognised that the development project of the State, in its very conception and execution, could be sustained only through a process of marginalisation.

In referring to the State, another participant felt that we do not address questions of 'majority' and 'minority'. In his opinion, the State's 'modernising project', involved a very small sub-stratum of society, composed of a largely English speaking, Westernised elite, which is not part of any grouping; the State has been most adept at using different groups and thus carries through the 'modernising project' brutally.

In terms of evolving a common perspective, the question raised was whether a 'collective historical project' of modernising the State differently from those who are running the State now, could be undertaken. This had to deal with questions of religion and culture, which it was felt was being dealt with only circumferentially in addressing problems of ethnicity and culture. One response to this was that there was a need for a civilisational perspective and to talk in civilisational terms and in the context of countries of Asia and the Third World, to look at retarded capitalism with such a background and perspective.

At the beginning of this concluding section it was said that this book is in one sense a culmination and in another it is the first step and a beginning. As the interactions at the Delhi symposium clearly pointed out, new beginnings had to be made. New beginnings using the insights and perspectives gathered through the culmination of one set of collective processes. If simple dichotomies such as action and research are not accepted and an implied holism informs the concern, engagement and a certain degree of intervention, the intellectual moment expressed through this book is only one moment.

In recognising the intellectual dimension earlier, we had said that this is not to be equated with academic discourses on the subject. This does not mean, however, that we have precluded the possibility that what has been attempted through this book can be of value to academic discourses and interactions on the subject. Here again we draw

upon the perspective outlined by the Founding Consultation of ARENA, which in identifying “the state of social sciences and social research” as an area of ARENA’s core concerns, had stated:

“There is a need to critically appraise the conceptual models, categories and frames of references within which the academic and intellectual community understands and explains the changing social reality of the different countries of Asia. It is now accepted more and more that social sciences cannot really be ‘value-free’. What value premises underpin the investigations and analysis of the academic? What are the existing gaps in terms of area of study and investigation, which are crucial to a better comprehension of social transformation?”

The question may be raised as to what the purpose or aim of a ‘better comprehension of social transformation is.’ The answer is not to merely arrive at a superior intellectual notion of knowing; it is important because how we understand social processes, influences the way we look at and are involved in the processes of social transformation. The crying need for certain fundamental social changes that lead to a more humane society, needs no underlining. Human society is not a passive neutral entity on which forces such as modernisation and capitalism act, and where human beings drift towards the future as passive objects being acted upon. The impact of the present economic organisation of society and its perspectives is resulting in greater and greater social anomie and the tearing apart of community. Human beings as subjects of history do not merely react to these processes, but they have acted and do act to change the tide of events. Knowledge and knowledge structures are also part of that change. Social science (however dubious may be its claims to be called a ‘science’, accepting it for the moment, just as one more telegraphic term conveying a sphere of human activity) is then part of these knowledge structures that interpret and present social reality. There is a need to make it more accountable and relevant to fundamental social processes. This book is one such attempt in that direction.

The book takes up one particular aspect and reality of society, i.e., ethnicity. Yet, though ethnicity is only one particular aspect, because of the inability of both society and its knowledge structures, to deal with this reality, it has led to the conflicts arising out of ethnicity enveloping all of society and dragging all of it in a downward spiral of violence and death. The study project and the interactions related to it began from a fundamental recognition of this fact. It was therefore impossible to talk of practical interventions, however much as human beings we are far more pre-disposed to such a direction of thinking, without correspondingly dealing or looking at the way society has dealt with the problem. Therefore, we see the intellectual intervention as also a necessary important dimension and this book is in a sense a summation of that dimension only. It is an attempt to critique how conventional knowledge systems have dealt with problems such as ethnicity, and to provide signposts towards reworking these

notions of social science. While it is too early and perhaps too presumptuous and arrogant to say that this book represents the creation of a new social science, nonetheless it indicates the beginnings of a necessary, and fundamental task.

In that perspective, the contributions to the book and the Delhi symposium raised some very interesting and important points. At the Delhi symposium, as the editors of this volume have indicated in their introduction, two different paradigms were identifiable. We have dealt earlier with some of the key conceptual issues that emerged at the Delhi symposium. The two different paradigms can be broadly classified as one leaning on clearly more Marxist theoretical and intellectual traditions, and the other, while drawing upon some of the contributions of the first paradigm, relies more on evolving a more pluralist tradition. It may be simplistic to characterise the second tradition as being situated within purely a Western liberal tradition simply because it is non-Marxist. This is possible only if one sees the two paradigms as being in opposition and mutual exclusivity. This was not the actual reality of the Delhi discussions and interactions. There was an acceptance that the two paradigms needed very much to dialogue and interact.

It is rather difficult to summarise or even to highlight some of the new perspectives and conceptual orientations that emerged without running the risk of doing injustice to some of the conceptual richness contained in the contributions. What one will attempt in this concluding chapter, is to simply point to what this writer sees as some of the significant ideas that have emerged from the contributions in this volume. In terms of reworking social science concepts, on one hand we have Zawawi Ibrahim's (as also Carmen Abubakar's) critique of Furnivall's notion of plural societies and the analysis of inter-ethnic relations that emerged. On the other hand we have Rajni Kothari's, as also perhaps Asghar Ali Engineer's especially with regard to communalism, religious fundamentalism and ethnic chauvinism, arguing for pluralism not purely in an idealist sense, or from the interpretation of secularism in the Western sense. They attempt a more live re-interpretation of indigenous cultural values and traditions that exist among the people and provide the moorings to individuals and groups within our societies. The State as part of its 'modernising' project, not only runs counter to and destroys the pluralistic base of some of these cultural traditions, but falls back on chauvinist elements, thus creating intractable situations of violence. Rajni Kothari posits in opposition to this what he calls "the regeneration of communities" (p. 41). He sees this as becoming "the source of alternative people's security, where people derive protection not from a militarised State, but through the creation of structures of mutual nurturance and protection within and across community spaces."

Two moments, seen as necessary in the 'regeneration of community', as also of social movements, are pointed out very interestingly from two different standpoints. From the perspective of ethnicity and ethnic identity as a value, Rajni Kothari says, "Ethnicity can provide, together with social movements and citizens' actions, a different ground for security and democracy, which through the new collectivities of civil society are able to translate into real security and democracy for all, including the

most excluded, oppressed and marginalised. It is only through a clear and coherent identification with the new social consciousness being thrown up by social movements that ethnicity can regenerate and recover spaces in civil society" (p.41). Whereas Eduardo Tadem and Teresa Encarnacion in their contribution, after examining separatist movements in Southeast Asia that are based on ethnicity and religion from the more general perspective of social movements, see the need for establishing points of convergence and state that "the ethnic issue be properly addressed by all popular movements to avoid problems in the event of a change in power relations."

In a similar attempt at reworking social science concepts referred to earlier is Javeed Alam, who in his contribution takes up two very interesting cases, that of Bengal nationalism and differences in characteristics with regard to nationality or ethnic consciousness between the European experience and the Third World experience, and points to the inability of Third World retarded capitalism "to create social entities on modern secular lines in the Third World, as ascendant capitalism could do earlier in many parts of western Europe." However, the insistence of Third World States, to promote 'development' on the structures of retarded capitalism, is giving rise to not only a breakdown of pluralism, but leading ascendant social groups to lean upon the State to consolidate their position. The State becomes a part of the inter-religious ethnic tensions and rivalries, as in the case of Muslims and Hindus within Bengal nationalism. Whereas in the Jharkand case which he counterposes to Bengal nationalism, "people from diverse ethnic groups have moved closer together", "in a trans-ethnic sense", "with a persistent demand for recognition as a distinct group with a national make-up." Interestingly, here new pluralities are formed in the process of their opposition to 'development' that is imposed upon them by a retarded capitalist State. Javeed Alam says, "Historically viewed, for the people of Jharkhand, developmental activities have meant land alienation and pauperisation. Their opposition is not the misguided opposition of 'primitives' to national development, as it is prone to be portrayed." What he says can be said to be true of many other situations in Asia, as for example in Sarawak and Sabah. Situations though not dealt within this volume, are becoming a matter of 'survival against development' as has been brought forward so clearly in Ed Maranan's contribution which deals with the indigenous populations of the Philippines.

These situations of 'survival against development', are also anguishing situations where one sees the actual ethnicide of indigenous populations in Asia. This is pointed to very clearly in the chapters relating to the Hmong (Nicholas Tapp) and the Taiwan aborigines (Chiu Yen Liang). Here we see how the categories of dominant social science, such as 'development', 'modernisation', and so forth, not only do violence to those whose social realities these dominant categories cannot internalise, but would in an almost fascist mode of thinking see the ethnicide and destruction as inevitable, as a kind of numbers game — the kind of thinking that leads to large scale displacement of tribal peoples in large dam and similar development projects. The struggles against these dehumanising knowledge structures are very important struggles for social change and in support of the aspirations of people for a more human existence.

The theorisation process attempted through the study project and reflected in the book, is an essential moment in that struggle. A struggle that includes the struggle against the way conventional social science perceives and tries to explain social reality. Recent times have seen attempts by both individual scholars as well as new collectivities of concerned thinkers, to confront the explanations of conventional social science and contribute to a more powerful and relevant understanding of contemporary social processes. One important contribution in this tradition and relevant to discussions in this book, is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities – Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.³ A contribution essential in understanding the rise of official nationalism, arising with the rise of European national consciousness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and how the ideas of 'nation-state' and 'nationalism' have been pirated by Third World colonial and post-colonial elites.

In an extremely interesting contribution, delivered first in the form of a lecture on *Ethnic Conflict and Collective Violence*, S.J. Tambiah⁴ says Anderson's contribution could now be taken a step further:

"The politics of the newly independent States, framed initially in terms of 'nation-state' ideologies and policies, have by virtue of various internal dialectics and differences led to a new phase of politics dominated by the competitions and conflicts of 'ethnic collectivities,' who question nationalism and 'nation-state' dogmas. The politics of ethnicity is indeed a product of the interweaving and collision of the two global processes: world capitalism and its operation through multinational corporations, and widespread nation building by liberated colonies now ruled by elite intelligentsias who, however, have to react to their divided civilian constituencies. These interacting global processes, while having certain homogenizing effects, have simultaneously spawned differentiation and opposition within the new polities, manifested as ethnic conflict."

Stanley J. Tambiah charting a very interesting analysis of how the 'politics of ethnicity' has developed in the contemporary era, states that, "These developments are not merely old wine in new bottles or new wine in old bottles, for there are more potent transformative processes at work by which old categories and definitions of ethnic identity and interests are revalued and given new dimensions and contours."

The analysis and theorisation attempted in this book find mutual resonance, when Stanley Tambiah in his concluding segment of his paper on *Ethnic Conflict in the World Today*, writes:

"The time of modernising is also the time of inventing tradition as well as traditionalising innovations; of revaluing old categories and recategorising new values; of bureaucratic benevolence and bureaucratic resort to force; of participatory democracy and dissident civil war. The time is not simply one of order, or disorder, or anti-order: it is compounded of all three. Ubiquitous and

violent ethnic conflict is one of the marks of these intense times through which we are living and which we can see only darkly through the looking glass.

These violent and ubiquitous explosions also challenge and strain our conventional social science explanations of order, disorder, and conflict. However inadequately, we must cope with the phenomenon of destructive violence that accompanies ethnic conflict today."⁵

In such a perspective cope we must, but we have a responsibility to go further. This book as a moment in the larger project of social transformation, is only one physical, visible, organising focus, one intervening moment or mode. This book even as a moment in a larger project itself is not going to solve the problem, it is only a beginning. It is a small attempt at synthesis and understanding of where contemporary societies in Asia have come to and what should be the way forward. Many of us are "horrified at the intensity of violence in the social sphere" and this concern runs through the book. While recognising the need "to retain our plural societies with peace", we were also painfully aware that "the urge for justice cannot be sidelined."⁶

By looking at 'ethnicity' and in trying to understand it by an examination of the problems of identity and the attendant conflicts, we see much of the problems in the in-built injustices of our system and society. That is the central crisis of development. "The challenge that continues to face us today is how to achieve both, peace and justice."⁷

Notes

1. T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets Little Giddings," The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Vol.II (ed) M.H. Abrams et al, Norton, Toronto, 1979.
2. ARENA, Papers from the Foundation Consultation, Hong Kong, 17- 23, July 1980.
3. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, Verso edition and NLB, London, 1985.
4. Stanley J. Tambiah, "Ethnic Conflict in the World Today," American Ethnologist, Vol. 16 No. 2, May 1989. (This is a published version of Tambiah's 1988 American Ethnological Society Distinguished Lecture, titled, "Ethnic Conflict and Collective Violence").
5. ibid.
6. Harsh Sethi, Refocussing Praxis, Report of the UNU-UNDP Interaction Programme for Senior Action Researchers in South Asia, A SETU-LOKAYAN Report, Ahmedabad, Delhi, 1987.
7. ibid.

The contributors

Carmen A. Abubakar. Dean, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines. Anthropologist and concerned scholar who has researched and written extensively on the Moro problem in the Philippines.

Javeed Alam. Professor of Political Science, Himachal Pradesh University, India. Concerned with issues of Justice and Peace. Active in the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Chiu Yen Liang (Fred). Visiting Scholar, Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong. Doctoral Fellow, University of Chicago. Concerned with issues relating to minorities, labour and democratisation in Taiwan.

Kumar David (Editor). Former University of Sri Lanka academic and co-founder of the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE). Activist on several social and national issues. Has also taught in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, U.S.A. and Sweden. Has written extensively on the ethnic question of Sri Lanka.

Teresa S. Encarnacion. Lecturer in Political Science at the University of the Philippines. A concerned scholar on issues relating to Southeast Asian politics and international political economy.

Asghar Ali Engineer. Scholar and activist. Has written extensively on Islam, Indian Muslims and the communal problem and ethnic issues in South Asia. Has vigorously fought for reforms in the Bohra Muslim community. Vice-president of the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, India. Director, Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay, India.

Santasilan Kadirgamar (Editor). Former lecturer at Jaffna College, the Department of History, University of Colombo and the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Was President of the Jaffna branch of the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) and one of the founder members of the Jaffna Citizens' Committee. Presently visiting lecturer in several schools and universities in Tokyo, including the University of Tokyo, Japan.

Rajni Kothari. One of India's foremost social scientists and concerned scholars. Co-founder of Lokayan, a community action group that was the recipient of the 1985

Right Livelihood Award. Programme Director of the UN University Project on Peace and Global Transformation. Co-chairperson of the International Foundation for Development Alternatives. Former President of the People's Union of Civil Liberties, India. Recent publications include *State Against Democracy*, *Rethinking Development*, and *Politics and the People* (two volumes).

Smitu Kothari. Co-convenor of Lokayan and editor of Lokayan Bulletin. Actively involved in issues of ecology, human rights and people's movements. Engaged in the production of a film on the Narmada River Basin Dam project and the opposition to it.

Ed Maranan. Teaches Philippine Studies at the Asian Centre of the University of the Philippines. Editor of *Asian Studies Journal*, and member of the editorial board of *AGENDA*. Vice-President of TABAK, a nationwide alliance involved in national minority concerns. Former political detainee during the Marcos regime.

Kumar Rupesinghe. International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. Leader of ongoing projects in India, Pakistan and several African and European countries. Chairperson, Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems (HURIDOCs).

Lawrence Surendra. Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Research on New International Economic Order, Madras, India. Former Coordinator and presently council member of the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives, (ARENA). Participated in the United Nations University – Asian Perspectives Project and member of the S.E. Asian Perspectives Research team. Concerned scholar, with active research and writing in the area of Asian social sciences, ecology, environment and modernisation issues.

Eduardo C. Tadem. Teaches Development Studies at the University of the Philippines. Chairperson of the Centre for Agrarian Reform Transformation. Council member of the Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA). Has written on issues related to agrarian reform, rural development, regional economies and Philippine–Japan relations. Has contributed to the UN University Southeast Asian Perspectives Project.

Nicholas Tapp. Teaches anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Specialist and concerned scholar on the Hmong tribal people of Southeast Asia. Previously researched at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Zawawi Ibrahim. Anthropologist, Associate Professor of Rural Sociology at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Has researched and published extensively on the peasantry and rural labour in Malaysia, with special emphasis on ideology and social consciousness.

Index

- Abhayawardene, Hector., 205
aboriginal, 108
aborigine, ix, 143, 144–150, 152, 153–154
Abubakar, Carmen., 285
Aceh, 75
Adaza, Homobono., 119
Adivasis, 171
Afghanistan, 169, 239
Africa, iv, 61, 109, 169, 181–182
Ahmed, Imtiaz., 262
Ahmedabad, 166–167, 172, 177, 263
Ahmednagar, 36–37
Ainu, iii, iv, viii
Ainu Ethnic Study Society, viii
Akah, 81
Akali Dal, 37, 265, 266
Alam, Javeed., 4, 286
Algeria, 234
alienation, 10, 12, 19, 26–27, 55, 58, 117, 130, 156,
161, 221, 223, 261;
land, 56, 58–59, 131, 223, 286
Aligarh, 264
All Pattani United Liberation Front (PULO), 85
All-Ceylon Youth Congress, 185
Alliance (Malaysia), 136–138
Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines, 148, 150
Alonto, Abul Khayr., 121
Alsa Masa, 118
America (see USA), v, 109–110, 129
American Indian, 108
American protectorate, 76
Ami, 149
Amin, Samir., 189, 207–208
Amirthalingam, A., 188, 227, 230, 260
Amnesty International, 76
Amparai, 190, 200, 223, 225
Amritsar, 265, 279
Anderson, Benedict., 191, 287
Andhra Pradesh, 167, 170, 178
Anuradhapura, 206
Aquino, Agapito (Butz), 119
Aquino, President Corazon., 87, 88–89, 97,
103–104, 115–120, 121, 123
Aquino, Senator Benigno, 'Ninoy', 279
Arab, 50, 89, 116, 173, 174, 262
Arab countries, 90, 167, 173, 174
Arab League, 83
Arabia, 114
Arabic, 51
Arakanese, 72, 81
Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives
(ARENA), vii, 277–280, 283–284
Argentina, 46
Arrighi, Giovanni., 207–208
Aryan, 257
Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh)
Special Courts Ordinance, 269
ASEAN, 88–89, 273
Asia, iii, iv, vii, viii, x, 61, 109, 169, 181–182, 199,
278–280, 282–284, 286, 288; East, viii; South,
viii, ix, 182, 248–250, 252–253, 252, 253, 270,
273, 281; Southeast, viii, ix, 70–72, 77, 80–81,
85, 286; West, viii
Asian Development Bank, 103
Assam, 6, 164, 178, 256
Associated Cement, 57
Association of the Malays of Greater Pattani, 78
Atayal, 149
Aung, San., 89
Aurangabad, 172
Australia, 82, 90
Australian Oil Co., 90
authoritarian, 3, 30, 38, 95–96, 102, 148, 199–200,
214, 216, 227, 248, 251, 264
authoritarianism, ix, 139, 228, 258
autonomism, 100
autonomous, 61, 73, 77–80, 87, 101, 117–118, 123,
127, 152, 187, 199,
autonomy, 6, 34, 37, 47, 70, 72–73, 78, 82–83, 86,
88–89, 99, 103–105, 109, 112, 117–120,
122–123, 135, 138–139, 157, 161, 187, 190, 194,
196–197, 199, 201–203, 205, 207, 244, 249,
255–256, 266, 278, 283
Ayodhya, 174
Azar, Edward., 254
Baguio City, iv
Bahadur, Kalim., 182
Bala, T.R., 232
Balakumaran, 231, 239
Balasingam, K., 184
Balasingham, A.S., 234
Balico, Fr. Ed., 100
Balweg, Conrado., 99
Banatwala, 177
Bandaranaike–Chelvanayagam Pact, 191, 194, 221
Bandaranaike, S.W.R.D., 189, 190,
202, 220–221, 258
Bandaranaike, Mrs. S., 194, 196, 202, 214–216,
220–222, 226–227, 230, 242, 260
Bangkok, 77–79, 83, 86, 158
Bangladesh, 23, 84, 168, 182, 198–199, 249
Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), 86
Bangsa Moro Islamic Party (BMIP), 123
Bangsa Moro Liberation Organisation
(BMLO), 86, 87
Bangsa Moro Solidarity Conference (BMSC),
122
Bano, Shah., 175
Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP),
79, 83, 86
Barisan Partai Revolusi Nasional (PRANAS), 86
Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), 79, 86
Baroda, 177

- Basilan, 118–119
 Batjan, 75
 Belgium, 84
 Bengal, 46–48, 50, 52–55, 60, 62–63, 286
 Benguet, 102–103
 Bennagen, Ponciano., 98, 103
 Bhagvad–Gita, 264
 Bhandari, Romesh., 240
 Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), 165, 171, 177, 262
 Bhindranwale, Sant., 36, 266
 Bhivandi, 167, 263
 Bhoomihar, 170
 Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali., 279
 Bihar, 48
 Bihar Sharif, 171
 Birsa Munda Rebellion, 48
 Bismarck, 10
 Black 1902 Movement, 86
 Bloch, E., 161
 Bokaro Steel, 57
 Bombay, 53, 172, 178, 263
 Bontocs, 97
 border, 72, 78, 83, 108;
 China–Vietnam, 158; colonial, 158;
 Lao–Thailand, 158; Lao–Vietnam, 158;
 Thai–Burmese, 87; Thai–Malaysian, 83
 Borochoy, B., 2
 Bose, S. C., 218
 Bose, N.K., 47
 Brahmin, 169–171
 Brazil, 46, 62
 Britain (see UK), 72, 109, 218, 249
 British rule, 130, 135
 British–India, 129
 Buddhism, 71, 186, 196, 229, 257
 Buddhist, 35, 38, 73, 77–78, 80, 158–159, 190, 196
 204, 217, 220–221, 257–258, 260, 274
 Bumiputra, 40, 134, 137, 139
 Bumiputra Economic Congress
 First, 137; Second, 137
 Bunun, 149
 Bureau of Non–Christian Tribes, 100
 Burgher, 189, 204
 Burma, 11, 71–73, 79–81, 83–84, 87, 89, 91,
 155–159
 Burmese Communist Party (BCP), 73–74, 81,
 83–84, 87, 89, 92

 Cambodia, 169
 Canada, 90, 248
 capital, 127–132, 135–136, 139–140, 153, 215–217,
 225, 253, 283;
 British, 131, 132, 135; Chinese, 131, 132, 139;
 colonial, 131–132; foreign, 132, 135, 137, 139;
 merchant, 132; multinational, 96; plantation,
 131; transnational, 96
 capitalism, ix, 3, 13, 15, 17, 34, 39, 45–46, 49,
 62–64, 128, 132–133, 135, 170, 208, 216, 218,
 225, 226, 244, 252–254, 284, 287;
 anti, 79, 92, 206; ascendant, 45–46, 49, 61–62,
 286; bastardised, 224; colonial, 128, 132–134;
 global, 8; industrial, 128, 249; mercantilist,
 132, 249, 253; national, 253; retarded, 4, 9, 13,
 45–46, 49, 60–61, 63, 244–245, 283, 286; Third
 World, 45, 49; world, 16, 226
 capitalist, vii, 2–3, 5, 11, 13, 27, 35, 46, 53, 56, 61,
 63, 76–77, 101–102, 128, 130–131, 135–138,
 139–140, 148, 152–153, 168–169, 185, 207–208,
 217, 219, 222–223, 226–227, 244, 253,
 260–261, 278, 281;
 anti, 206–208, 250; merchant, 253, 259;
 penetration, 98; reproduction, 129
 Caribbean, 129
 Casablanca, 120
 cash crop, 37, 155
 caste, 5, 18, 22–23, 26–29, 36, 38–39, 46–47, 52, 56,
 98, 157, 163, 167–174, 177, 216, 229–232, 234,
 238, 253–254, 263–264
 caste riot, 172
 casteist, 170
 casteist politics, 177
 Catholic, 28
 Catholic Students Federation, 203
 Cellophil, 97
 Central Mountains, 146
 Central Command, 81
 Central Province, 195, 217, 222, 224, 253, 272
 Centre for Islamic Culture, 262
 Ceylon (see Lanka, Sri Lanka), 168, 182–185,
 187, 189–191, 194, 197, 199, 227, 257
 Ceylon Indian Congress, 188
 Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU), 203
 Ceylon National Congress, 218
 Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), 188, 227
 Ch'ing, 146, 151
 Chakmas, 23
 Chandigarh, 37
 Chandra, Bipin., 256
 Chelvam, 237
 Chelvanayagam, S.J.V., 186–188, 193, 197–199,
 229, 230
 Chetti, 232
 Chico River hydroelectric dam, 97, 104, 279
 Chidambaram, 240
 Chile, 227
 Chin, 72–73, 84
 China, iv, 83, 90, 146, 151, 155, 160, 168, 234, 273
 Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 143
 Chiu Yen Liang., 286
 Chota Nagpur, 48
 Christian, 28, 38, 58, 73, 76–77, 80, 83, 98, 112,
 116–121, 178, 190, 218, 230, 261

- Christians for National Liberation — Northern Luzon, 100
- Christian Liberation Army, 118
- Christianity, 71, 76, 98, 173, 186, 264
- Church, 28, 98
- Citizen's Commission, 271
- Citizens for Democracy, 271
- Citizenship Acts, 186, 188, 194, 219, 258
- Civilian Home Defence Forces (CHDF), 118
- class, vii, 2, 5–11, 13, 18, 22, 26, 30, 31, 36, 46, 49–50, 54, 59–60, 63–64, 70, 75, 84, 91–92, 98–99, 113, 127, 129–140, 152, 156, 168, 184, 189–190, 194, 205, 208, 213–214, 216–221, 225–227, 229, 235, 238, 240–244, 249, 252, 254, 259, 263, 278, 282
- coal, 56
- Cobban, Alfred., 182
- coconut, 218
- coffee, 219
- Colombo, 40, 194–195, 201, 217, 222, 229–230, 235, 271–272
- colonial, iv, 34, 53, 58, 73, 75, 78, 81, 83, 100, 105, 108, 110, 115, 128–129, 130, 139, 146, 158, 183, 189, 198–199, 213, 251, 257, 259, 278, 287; administration, 7, 75, 218, 248; anti, 10, 53, 96, 98, 257; armed force, 75; bureaucracy, 71, 132; capital, 131, 132, 134; economy, 129, 132, 249; expansion, 128; expenditure, 131; formation, 129–131; government, 101–102, 131–133; history, 98, 103; neo, 109–110, 148, 201, 244; occupation, 101; partitioning, 72; period, 46, 50, 71, 75, 110, 116, 135, 205, 248, 259; policy, 37, 102, 108, 111, 131; power, 52, 80, 249, 278; process, 130; rule, iv, 132–133, 186, 217, 249; rulers, 53; society, 95, 201; state, 47, 59–60, 129–136, 182, 251–252; strategy, 111; system, 128
- colonialism, vii, ix, 2–4, 35, 77, 80, 92, 96, 98–100, 106, 110, 114, 116, 130, 133, 135, 189, 278; American, 96, 101–102; anti, 79, 250; British, 73, 78, 217; Filipino, 76; French, 78; internal, 109–110; Japanese, 146, 149; neo, 96, 100, 106, 109, 148; Spanish, 76, 96, 102; Western, 71
- colonisation, 77, 102, 191, 194, 223; British, 158; French, 158; internal, 17, 148; land, 223, 259; state-sponsored, 190–191, 194, 200, 223, 225;
- coloniser, 85, 98; British, 83; Portuguese, 75; Spanish, 76
- Columbus, v
- Commission on National Integration (CNI), 100, 122
- Committee on Local Governments, 122
- common civil code, 176
- communal, 26, 28–29, 31–32, 34, 36, 39–40, 43, 55, 114, 164, 169–171, 176–178, 185, 252, 256, 258–259, 263–264, 268, 281–282; carnage, 221; conflict, 109, 171–172, 179; exclusiveness, 47–48, 51–53; holocaust, 167; lands, 77, 111; organisation, 39, 165, 167, 169, 172, 174, 264; party, 28, 134, 166; politics, 30, 33, 133–135, 168, 177; representation, 183–184; riot, 165–166, 172, 175, 221, 226, 228, 230, 232, 263, 270–271; tension, 35, 51, 190; violence, 20–26, 29, 53, 108–109, 165–167, 278, 281, 282
- communalisation, 37, 53, 263
- communalism, 20–23, 27–28, 33, 38, 55, 63, 98, 165–166, 168–169, 172, 177–179, 182–184, 223, 228, 262–263, 268, 270–271, 281, 285
- communist, 28, 165–167, 178, 184, 188, 205
- communism, 132, 223
- communist, vii, 7, 54, 82–83, 97, 99, 159, 195, 203, 219, 222, 231, 239, 265, 279; anti, 81–82, 87; insurgency, 143, 279; parties, 28, 84, 92, 239, 245,
- Communist Party of Ceylon, 185, 188, 189, 195–197, 203, 205, 216, 222, 238, 241
- Communist Party of India, 54, 233
- Communist Party of Malaya (MCP), 79, 83, 85, 132
- Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), 82, 83, 157
- Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), 92, 97
- Conference of Indigenous and Minority Peoples in Asia, iv
- Congress Party, 54, 166, 218, 257–158, 261–262
- Congress–I, 25, 28, 167, 171–172, 174, 240, 263, 265, 266, 271, 277
- Congress–O, 166
- Congress–S, 171
- Constitution 1987, 122, 123
- constitutional monarchy, 78
- Consultative Assembly of Minority Peoples of the Philippines (CAMPP), 96, 103
- Cooper, R., 155–157
- Cordillera, 97, 99–101, 102–104
- Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), 96, 103
- Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF), 99, 100
- Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA), 99
- Corregidor Island, 111
- Cotabato, 111–112, 118
- cotton, 36–37; textiles, 53
- Council of the People's Trust (MARA), 138
- counter-insurgency, 80, 97, 101, 158
- Cuba, 169, 234

- Dakar, 82
 Dalits, 38
 Darul-Islam, 74–75, 80
 Das, 235
 Davao, 118
 Davis, Horace B., 181, 206
 Debray, Regis., 206
 Deccan, 37;
 riots, 36
 Declaration of the World's Indigenous Peoples
 Concerning the 500th Anniversary of the
 Conquest of America, v
 decolonisation, vii, 74–75, 98–100, 106, 133,
 181–183, 205, 278
 Delhi, viii, x, 25, 30, 37–38, 174, 177, 214, 233, 235,
 240–241, 263, 269–270, 273–274, 279–281, 285
 Delhi symposium, viii, x, 280–281, 283–285
 Democratic Action Party (DAP), 137
 Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), 150, 151
 Democratic Workers Congress, 188
 de Silva, Colvin R., 185, 191, 218, 221
 Deoras, Balasaheb., 177
 Desai, Hitendra., 166
 Desai, Morarji., 166
 Devanayagam, 239
 developmentalism, 34–36, 95
 developmentalist, 96–97, 100, 102
 Dhanbad, 57
 Dias, N.Q., 221
 dictatorship, 103
 Diku, 47, 48, 56, 58–59
 Dissanayake, Gamini., 221
 divide and conquer, 80;
 rule, 23, 72, 88, 183, 249, 262
 Do Amaral, Xavier., 88
 Donoughmore Commission, 183, 249
 Donoughmore Reforms, 184–185
 Dravidian, 170, 233, 240
 drug trafficking, 237
 Dudley Senanayake–Chelvanayagam Pact, 194
 Dulag, Macliing., 279
 Duraiyappah, Alfred., 196, 231
 Durkheim, 126

 East Timor, 75–76, 84, 87, 90
 East Timor Democratic Union (UDT), 75, 87
 Eastern Province, 188, 190–191, 193, 200, 216,
 224–225, 229, 238–239
 EDSA revolution, 118
 Eelam, 213, 215, 225, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239–240,
 244
 Eelam National Liberation Front, 206
 Eelam Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), 239
 Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front
 (EPRLF), 229, 231, 237–240
 Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS),
 229, 231, 233, 237–240

 Egypt, 86
 Encarnacion, Teresa., 286
 Engels, F., 47
 Engineer, Asghar Ali., 285
 Ethiopia, 169
 Erimalai, 231
 ethnicide, iv, 23, 155, 286
 Europe, 2, 17, 46, 50, 57, 109, 181–182, 233, 248,
 286
 European Economic Community (EEC), 103, 104
 export oriented industrialisation, 139, 253, 260
 export processing zone, 97

 Faizabad, 174
 Fakir Sanyassi Rebellion, 47
 fascist, 15, 31, 286;
 neo-fascist, 200, 235, 241, 243; semi-fascist,
 214, 215, 216
 Federal Land Development Authority, 138
 Federal Party (FP), 183, 186–188, 190–191, 194,
 196–198, 203–204, 229–231, 238
 feminist, 152–153
 feudal, 10, 55, 61–62, 77, 101–102, 129, 170, 218,
 222, 253;
 anti, 52, 54
 feudalism, 98, 170
 Filipinas Foundation, 117
 fishermen, 153
 fishing, 144
 Food Corporation of India, 37
 forest, 97, 146;
 economy, 156; produce, 57
 Fortin, 139
 France, 11, 90
 Frank, Andre–Gunder., 207–208
 Free Aceh Movement (GAM), 75, 80
 Free Malaya, 83
 Free Papua Information Office, 82
 Free Papua Organisation (OPM), 74–75, 82, 85,
 88
 French Opium Monopoly, 156
 fundamentalism, 11, 19, 23, 29, 42, 164, 168,
 172–173, 174, 176, 250
 fundamentalist, 7, 19, 24, 26–27, 164, 173–175,
 252, 264, 266
 Furnivall, J.S., 108, 127, 133, 184, 285

 Gagungan Melayu Pattani Raya (GAMPAR), 78,
 83
 Gal Oya scheme, 223
 Gandhi, Mrs. Indira., 37, 109, 164–170, 174, 178,
 228, 240, 258, 262–263, 265–267, 270, 279
 Gandhi, M.K., 44, 169, 170, 218, 257
 Gandhi, Rajiv., 213, 228
 Gandhi, Sanjay., 266
 Gandhism, 230
 Gellner, Ernest., 11–21

- General Union of Eelam Students (GUES), 239
 genocide, iv, 85, 143, 148, 221, 279
 Gerakan, 137
 Germany, 10
 Ghurye, G.S., 47
 Godse, Nathu Ram., 169
 Golden Crescent, 157
 Golden Temple, 37, 265–267, 279
 Golden Triangle, 7, 84
 Gonzales, Norberto., 119
 Goonewardene, Leslie., 185
 Gramsci, A., 245
 Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD), 119, 121
 Great Kol Rebellions, 48
 green revolution, 21, 35, 37, 170, 253, 264
 Green Tigers, 273
 Guatemala, 169
 guerilla, 86, 99, 101, 132, 158, 237, 255, 273
 Gujarat, 21–23, 37, 170–171
 Gujarat riot, 172
 Gunasinghe, Newton., 225
 Gunawardene, Philip., 185, 189–190, 218, 225
- Habash, 239
 Han, 146–147, 149–152, 154;
 centric, 149; Chinese, 143–144, 149
 Hanasaki, Prof Kohei., viii
 Haq, Fazal-ul., 53, 54
 Harijan, 167, 170–171, 173, 262
 Haryana, 170
 Hawke, Prime Minister Robert., 90
 Heavy Engineering Corporation, 57
 heroin, 84
 Highland Agriculture Development Project
 (HADP), 103
 High Mountains Are Green, 148
 Hindu, 4, 11, 16, 18, 20, 22, 26–27, 28, 35–36, 40,
 47–48, 50–55, 58, 163–167, 169, 171–174, 176,
 183, 230, 248, 255–258, 261–267, 286
 Hinduisation, 261
 Hinduism, 20, 71, 173–174, 179, 186, 264
 Hindustan Times, 267
 Hmong, ix, 155–161, 286
 Hobsbawm, E., ix
 Hokkaido, iii
 Hokkaido Former Aborigines Law, iii
 Hokkaido National University, viii
 Home Guards, 273
 Honshu, iii, iv
 House Committee on Banks and Currencies, 122
 human rights, v, 85, 90, 95, 103–104, 199, 201, 204,
 215, 234–235, 270, 273
 Hunter, W.W., 59
 Hyderabad, 177
- Ibrahim-Uy, Datu Ray., 121
 Igorot, 101–102
- ILAGA gang, 118
 Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK), 186–188
 Illaignar Peravai, 231
 imperialism, iv, vii, 2, 4, 8, 10, 45, 49, 55, 61–63, 72,
 92, 106, 110, 114, 116, 218;
 anti, 92, 185, 230, 257; British, 218, 222
 imperialist, 9, 60, 62, 99, 101;
 anti, 10, 173, 206–207, 250, 259
 Import Substitution Industrialisation, 137, 225,
 253
 India, vii, ix, 4–5, 19, 22–23, 25–27, 30, 35, 39,
 45–46, 53, 55, 59, 62–63, 84, 109, 163–175, 177,
 181–183, 186, 188–189, 194, 199, 202, 205,
 213–216, 218–219, 229, 232, 235, 237, 238–245,
 248–249, 251–252, 255–258, 261–262, 269, 274
 Indian Criminal Procedure Code, 175
 Indian National Congress (INC), 52
 Indian Nationalist Movement, 183
 Indian Ocean, 90
 Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), 205, 215,
 274
 Indianisation, 165
 indigenous people, 56, 105
 Indigo Revolt, 48, 52
 Indios, 114
 Indo-Ceylon Pact of 1966, 194, 258
 Indo-Ceylon Pact of 1972, 194
 Indo-Ganges Plains, 3
 Indo-Malay peninsula, 114
 Indo-Pakistani relations, 258
 Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, 191, 199, 202, 205,
 213, 215–216, 238–239, 273–274
 Indochina, 156, 158
 Indonesia, 7–8, 71, 74–75, 79–80, 82–90, 169
 Inpam, 232
 Institute of Islamic Studies, 178
 insurgent groups, 83, 89,
 Internal Security Act (ISA), 135
 International Association for Tamil Research,
 195
 international economic order, 92
 International Fund for Agricultural
 Development, 103
 international market, 71
 International Monetary Fund (IMF), 33, 222
 International Permanent People's Tribunal, 84
 International Rubber Regulation Scheme, 131
 International Tamil Conference, 222
 Iran, 83, 168, 174;
 Shah of., 173
 Iranian Revolution, 40
 Iraq, 83
 Irian Jaya, 74–75, 80, 88, 91
 iron ore, 56
 Islam, 3, 40, 71, 76, 79–80, 84, 86, 100, 110, 112,
 114, 116, 173–176, 179, 186, 262, 264
 Islamic, 20, 75, 77–79, 83, 88, 90, 92, 164, 172, 187

- Islamic Investment Bank, 122
 Islamic Party, 137
 Islamic State, 8, 23, 40, 79, 182
 Islamic Summit, 40
 Islamicise, 20
 Islamisation, 79
 Israeli, 274
 Itneg, 97
 Iyer, Justice Krishna., 28
- J.R.—Amirthalingam Accord, 221
 Jabida massacre, 111–112
 Jacobin, 220
 Jaffna, 184, 186, 190, 194–197, 200, 204, 215, 217–218, 229–235, 237–238, 253, 273
 Jaffna University, 204, 234
 Jaffna Youth Congress, 184–185, 190
 Jain, Girilal., 167, 171
 Jakarta, 76, 80
 Jalgaon, 167
 Jamate-Islami, 167
 Jammu, 174
 Jan Sangh, 165, 166, 170, 178
 Janata Government, 178
 Janata Party, 167, 170, 171
 Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP), 202–204, 214–215, 227, 241–242
 Japan, iii, iv, viii, 90, 103
 Japanisation, 146
 Jat, 37, 170, 264
 Jayatilleke, D.B., 218
 Jayawardena, Kumari., 259
 Jayewardene, J.R., 196, 200, 204, 213–215, 221, 227–228, 235, 241–244, 260, 273
 Jeddah, 119, 121
 Jeddah Accord, 119–120
 Jen-ying Wang, 143
 Jharkhand, 4, 46–48, 55–57, 59–60, 62–64, 286
 Jinnah, M.A., 177, 218
 Joint Border Agreement, 89
 Jolo, 119
 Jolo, Battle of, 113
 Jomo, K.S., 137
 Jordan, 123
 Jouwe, Nicolaas., 88
 jute textile industry, 53
- Kabataang Makabayan, 86
 Kachin, 73, 81, 84
 Kachin Independent Organisation (KIO), 72, 74
 Kagal, Ayesha., 266
 Kaisieppo, Marcus., 88
 Kalinga, 97, 279
 Kalugalle, K.G.B., 221
 Kalutara, 222
 Kamlon rebellion, 111
 Kandiah, P., 195
- Kandy, 195, 221
 Kanhu, Bir Singh., 48
 Kankasanturai, 197
 Karachi riots, 23
 Karalasingham, V., 205–206, 240
 Karayar, 231
 Karen, 7, 72–74, 80, 81, 83, 91, 156, 159
 Karen Independent Army (KIA), 74
 Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), 72, 73
 Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), 74
 Karen National Union (KNU), 72–74, 87
 Karen Salween, 73
 Karenni, 73, 81
 Karenni People's United Liberation Front, 81
 Karenni United Liberation Front (KPULF), 72, 73
 Karnataka, 170, 178
 Karunanidhi, 241
 Kayah, 73
 Kelantan, 77–78
 Kerala, 27
 Kethiswaran, 237
 Keuneman, Pieter., 185
 Khalistan, 11
 KHAM, 171–172
 Khomeini, Ayatollah., 40, 173
 Kisan Sabhas, 54
 Kobbekaduwa, 204
 Kodosky, El., 3
 Korea, iv
 Kopay, 188
 Kota Bharu, 78
 Kothari, Rajni., 285
 Krishak Praja Party, 54
 Kshatriya, 171
 Kuala Lumpur, 134
 Kulawamsa, 257
 Kuomintang (KMT), x, 143, 146–148, 150–151, 153
 Kumaranatunga, Chandrika, 242
 Kumaranatunga, Vijaya, 242
 Kurmi—Mahato, 47, 58
 Kurmis, 171
 Kuttimani, 231–232
 Kwangju riot, 279
- labour, 58, 97, 129–135, 139, 219, 223, 227;
 agricultural, 155, 264; female, 157;
 immigrant, 129, 132, 249; organiser, 152;
 organisation, 131; plantation, 136; rural, 5,
 slave, 129
 division of labour, 129–130, 155, 157;
 colonial, 249; cultural, 130; economic, 130,
 254, ethnic, 129; international, 139, 148, 207
 Labour Party (Taiwan), 152
 Laclau, E., 10
 Laclau—Mouffec, 245
 Lahu, 81

- Lake House Press, 195
 Lanao, 82, 111
 Lanao de Norte, 118
 Lanao del Sur, 118–119
 land reform, 96–97
 Land Registration Act of 1902, 101
 landlordism, 45, 54
 Lanka (see Sri Lanka, Ceylon), 181, 184, 187, 200, 205
 Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), 185, 188–189, 195–197, 203–205, 216, 222, 238, 241
 Lanyu, 146, 150, 153
 Laos, 155, 159
 Latin America, iv, 169
 Lebanon, 10, 233
 Lee Kuan Yew, 227
 Legazpi, 113
 Lehman, F., 160
 Lembaga Padi Negara (LPN), 138
 Lenin, V.I., 62, 198
 Leninist, 55, 205, 241–242
 Liberation Front of Republic Pattani (LFRP), 79
 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), 10, 202, 215, 229, 231–235, 237–238, 240, 271,
 Libya, 83, 174
 Lim Mah Hui, 130, 133
 limestone, 56
 Linton, Ralph., 108
 Lisbon, 90
 Lisu, 81
 Lobato, Nicolao., 88
 Local Self-Government Act (1887), 52
 London, 73, 109, 238
 Longowal, Harchand Singh., 37
 Lucman, Rashid., 86, 87
 Luzon, 100, 114

 Mactan, 113
 Madras, 233, 237, 239, 242
 Magadh Period, 60
 Magellan, 113
 Maguindanao, 76, 86, 112–113, 115–116, 118
 Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP), 189
 Mahar, 172
 Maharashtra, 169–170, 172, 262–263
 Mahaveli Irrigation Scheme, 224, 225
 Mahawamsa, 257
 Maheswaran, Uma., 232–233, 237
 Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), 138
 majoritarianism, 18, 27
 Malacca, 114
 Malawi, 59
 Malay Nationalist Party, 78
 Malay State of Pattani, 78
 Malaya, 78, 128, 158
 Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), 134, 135–128
 Malayan General Labour Union (GLU), 132
 Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), 134–136
 Malaysia, ix, 5, 22, 83, 85–86, 89–90, 127–128, 130, 134–135, 137, 139, 169, 262
 Malegaon, 177
 Malik, Baljit., 19
 Managua, 92
 Manavar Peravai, 231, 232
 Mangyan, 103
 Manila, 76, 88, 112, 114, 118
 Manila Times, 112
 Mao, 11
 Maoist, 220, 239
 Maranan, Ed., 286
 Maranaos, 76, 86, 112, 115–116
 Maratha, 37, 169–172
 Marathwada, 172
 Marcos, Ferdinand., 77, 80, 83, 85, 88–89, 95, 97, 102–103, 118, 120, 122, 228, 279
 Marcos, Imelda., 88–89
 marginalisation, 19, 32, 77, 105–106, 158, 237, 283
 marginalised, 80, 96, 100, 262, 283
 martial law, 1–2, 77, 97, 143, 147, 150
 Marwari, 37
 Marx, K., 61, 126
 Marxism, 3, 9, 34, 234, 238, 241; anti, 223
 Marxist, 9, 49–50, 56, 60, 62, 72, 74, 96, 99, 189, 208, 217, 219–220, 229, 231, 233–234, 238, 240, 243, 258, 285; anti, 235
 Marxist-Maoist, 86
 Mastura, Michael., 87, 119
 Matalam, Datu Udtug., 112
 Mathew, Cyril., 221
 Maududi, Maulana Abul Ala., 167
 Meenakshipuram, 164, 173–174
 Meerut, 23, 25, 171
 Meo, 159–160
 mercantilist, 261, 272
 Merdika, 111
 Mewar, 37
 Miao, 160–161
 Middle East, 7, 83, 86, 114, 168, 171, 261
 militarisation, 96, 102, 251–252, 274, 279
 Mindanao, 76, 87, 110–114, 118–119, 121–123, 228, 279
 MINDANAO, 118
 Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM), 77, 112, 117
 Mindanao-Sulu provinces, 77, 86, 90
 Mindoro, 103
 miners, 144
 mines, 5, 58, 129, 147
 mining, 56–57, 102, 144, 148
 Mining Act of 1905, 102
 minoritisation, 95, 102, 105

- MINSUPALA, 118
 Misquito Indian, 92
 Misuari, Nur., 77, 83, 86-87, 91, 113, 115-116, 119
 Mitra, Ramon., 121
 MMA, 122
 MNLF Reformist Front, 116
 MNLF-RG, 123
 Mohajirs, 23
 Momin, 47
 Mon, 72, 81
 monarchy, 73
 Moor, 114, 187, 189, 200
 Morisco, 114
 Moro, 7, 10, 11, 76-77, 80, 85, 87-89, 110-111, 112-117, 120-123
 Moro Bangsa, 86
 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), 86-87, 116, 120, 123
 Moro Nation, 86
 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), 76-77, 82-84, 86, 88-89, 91-92, 110, 112-113, 115-123
 Moro Nationalist Movement, 118
 Morocco, 120, 262
 Moscow, 86
 Mountain Administration Unit, 146
 movements, iii, ix, 11-12, 33, 43, 48, 55, 60, 74, 173, 181, 199, 206-208, 229, 238;
 agrarian, 48; anti-nuclear, 153;
 anti-state, 207; armed, 7, 9, 71; armed militant, 273; armed resistance, 98;
 children's rights, 56; civil disobedience, 194;
 communist, 11, 54-55, 92; Darul-Islam, 75, 80; ecology, 42, 56, 153; Eelam, 229;
 emancipatory, 56; ethnic, ix, 9, 11-12, 16;
 ethnonationalist, 110; Faraidi, 49;
 feminist, 153; Gandhian, 190;
 human rights, 42; independence, 116, 218, 256; indigenous, 105; Islamic, 116;
 labour, 131, 139, 152-153, 202; left, 184, 187-188, 195, 197-198, 202-203, 214-215, 218, 223, 230, 243; left-democratic, 60;
 liberation, iv, 78, 80, 207, 216, 222, 229, 237-238; labour, 153; Marxist, 258;
 Marxist-Leninist, 265; militant, 10; 174, 213, 225, 230, 243-244, 257, 274; Moro, 90, 115;
 national, 2, 47-49, 185, 257; nationalist, 7, 11, 53, 111-113, 115, 121, 133, 136, 182, 190, 206-208, 256-257; nationality, 62; peace, 42;
 peasant, 53; peoples, iii, v, 12, 95;
 political, 47, 96, 139; popular, 32, 92, 207, 286; progressive, 216; protest, 10, 231;
 racial-equality, 12; reform, 53;
 religious, 207; revivalist, 265;
 revolutionary, 7, 99; rights, 42;
 Samasamaja, 218; secessionist, 76;
 semi-fascist, 214-215; separate, 86, 231;
 separatist, 70-72, 74-75, 80-81, 83-85, 89, 91, 286; social, 41-42, 150, 153-154, 286;
 spiritual, 42; student, 202; survival, 42;
 Suriyamal, 185; Tamil, 207, 237;
 Tamil liberation, 232, 237;
 Tamil militant, 213; Titu Mir, 47;
 trade union, 132, 202; Trotskyist, 258;
 victims, 56, 208-209; women, 208;
 working class, 186, 208; xenophobic, 209
 Movement for Inter-Racial Justice & Equality (MIRJE), 204
 Mt. Province, 103
 Mughal, 50, 256
 Mukti Bahini, 240
 multinational corporations, iv, 31, 62, 90, 287
 Munck, R., 3, 9
 Munda, 47-48
 Munda, Birsa., 48
 Murad, Haji., 87
 Muradabad riot, 165, 167, 171
 Murungan Conference (1974), 231
 Muslim, 3-4, 11, 22-23, 26-28, 35, 38, 47-48, 50-55, 58, 75-80, 83-84, 87-88, 89, 90-91, 98, 100, 110, 112, 114, 117, 119-121, 123, 163-176, 183, 204, 225, 249, 255-258, 261-264, 279, 286;
 anti, 271
 Muslim Leaders' Consensus of Unity, 112
 Muslim League, 28, 54, 218, 256
 Muslim Personal Law, 175
 Mustapha, Tun., 83
 Muthukumaraswamy, 231
 Nabha, 269
 Nadesan, 184-185
 Nagalingam, P., 196
 Naganathan, 188
 Namasudra, 47, 53-54
 Narathiwat, 77, 79
 Narayan, Jayaprakash., 163
 Nasik, 172, 177
 nation-state, vii, 2, 3, 9, 15, 17, 34, 39, 45, 61, 71, 74, 102, 108, 110, 181-183, 217, 278
 National Alliance of Advocates for Minority Rights, 103
 National Democratic Front (NDF), 81, 84, 87, 98-99
 National Liberation Army (FALINTIL), 82, 88
 National Liberation Front of Pattani (NLFP), 79, 82
 National Paddy Authority, 138
 national question, 45-46, 50, 52, 54, 62-64, 97, 100, 182-184, 197, 198, 202-205, 216, 241, 260-261, 272-273
 National Security (Amendment) Bill, 268
 National Security Act (NSA), 266-267
 nationalisation, 57-58, 166, 222, 225, 230

- nationalism, ix, 2-4, 10, 12, 17, 31, 72, 79, 98, 100, 110, 114, 133, 136, 164, 181-182, 184, 186, 189-190, 201, 205-208, 218, 234, 238, 243, 248, 255, 257-258, 261-262, 278
- nationalist, vii, 2, 27, 40, 51-52, 54, 56, 78, 92, 99, 101, 111, 113, 146, 183-184, 201, 203-204, 206-207, 209, 215, 233-234, 239, 243, 248-250, 256, 278, 286-287
- nationality, 3, 46-47, 58, 60-61, 63, 73, 113, 201, 206
- Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), 203-204, 216, 227, 241-243
- Naya, 84
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, 163, 166, 183, 184, 218, 256-258
- Nepal, 249
- Nesan, 239
- Netherlands East Indies Co., 75
- New Economic Policy (NEP), 134-135, 138-140
- New Guinea, 75
- New People's Army (NPA), 82, 92, 97, 121
- New York, 75, 158
- Newly Industrialised Countries (NIC), 139
- Nicaragua, 92, 234
- Non-Aligned Movement, 90, 174
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 81, 104, 224-225, 245
- North Command, 81
- North Cotabato, 118
- North Sulawesi, 74
- Northern Province, 186, 188, 190, 195, 202, 216, 218, 224-225, 235, 238
- nuclear, 150, 153;
arms, 90
- Nuwara Eliya, 195, 219
- Office of Muslim Affairs, 122
- old-TELO, 233, 238
- OMACC, 122
- Omai-Wetar Straits, 90
- Operation Bluestar, 37, 267
- opium, 84, 87, 89, 155-159
- Ople, Blas., 122
- Oraons, 47
- Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), 82-84, 88-89, 120-123
- Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), 90
- OSCIA, 122
- Oxford English Dictionary, iv
- Pa-o, 81
- Pabna Peasant Rebellions, 48, 52
- Pacific Ocean, 90
- Padmanabha, 231, 239
- Paiwan, 149
- Pakistan, 8, 23, 40, 83, 163, 165, 168, 182, 199, 249, 251, 257, 261, 274, 279
- Palawan, 119
- Palestine, vii
- Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), 83, 121, 239
- Palk Straits, 199, 257
- Palungs, 81
- Pan Malaysianism, 133
- Panapanaya, 149
- Panglong Agreement, 74, 89
- Panglong Conference
First, 74; Second, 74
- Pannakam, 197
- Panvel, 172, 177
- Papua New Guinea (PNG), 82, 89
- Parbhani, 172
- parliamentary democracy, 72
- Parliamentary Elections Act, 219
- parochialism, 178, 185
- Partido Kordiyera, 96
- Patel, 170, 172, 218
- Path of God, 79
- Pathans, 23
- Pathet Lao, 158
- Patiala, 269
- Pattani, 77, 79
- Pattani National Liberation Front, 78-79, 82-83, 85-86, 92
- Pattani National Liberation Movement (BMPP), 79, 86
- Pattani National Revolutionary Front (PNRF), 79, 86
- Pattani People's National Liberation Army, 79
- Pattani United Liberation Army (PULA), 83
- Pattani United Liberation Front (PULO), 78
- Patel, V., 218
- Pawar, Sharad, 171
- Peace Agreement, 120
- peasant, 2, 5, 37, 50-51, 55-56, 59, 96, 129-133, 135-136, 153, 156, 170, 218, 222-223
- peasantry, 47-48, 52-55, 58, 62, 63, 96, 129-133, 135-136, 139, 140, 217, 220, 223, 258
- Pemerintah Revolutioner Republic Indonesia (PRRI), 74
- Pendatun, Salipada., 87
- People's Liberation Army (PLA), 239
- People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOT), 229, 231-233, 237-238
- People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), 268, 270
- People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), 270
- Peradeniya University, 230-231
- Perbadanan Nasional (PERNAS), 138
- Perera, N.M., 185, 218
- Perinanayagam, Handy., 184
- Persian, 50-51

- personal law, 176
 Philippine Amanah Bank, 122
 Philippine Daily Inquirer, 121
 Philippine Revolution, 98
 Philippine Revolutionary Army, 101
 Philippines, iv, vii, ix, 21, 71, 76-77, 79-80, 82-84,
 86, 88-89, 90-91, 96, 99, 101-103, 105, 110,
 112-115, 117, 120-121, 279, 286
 Pimentel Jr, Aquilino., 119
 plantation, 5, 129, 131, 132, 188, 217-219, 223,
 227, 238, 249, 253, 258;
 capital, 131; economy, 217-218, 222; worker,
 4-5, 186, 194-195, 200, 203, 219-220, 227, 229,
 242, 253, 257-258, 272, 274
 pluralism, 266, 281, 285-286
 pogrom, 195, 248, 251, 253-254, 263, 270-273;
 anti-Tamil, 194, 200-202
 Point Pedro, 195
 Pol Potian, 215
 Polaris submarine, 90
 polygamy, 176
 polygny, 156
 Polynesian-Melansian, 146
 Ponnambalam, G.G., 184, 186, 188
 Ponnambalam., Kumar., 204
 Ponnambalam, V., 196-197
 Poona, 36-37
 poppy, 155, 158
 Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
 (PFLP), 239
 Portugal, 75, 82
 Poseidon submarine, 90
 Poulantzas, Nicos., 2, 135
 Prabakaran, 232-234
 Premadasa, Prime Minister., 214
 Presidential Degree 1618, 118
 Presidential Parliamentary Election, 242
 Presidential Task Force, 118
 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), 201, 204,
 228, 232
 primordial, 3, 46, 48, 148, 169, 173;
 inhabitant, 150, 152; resources, 34; society, 1;
 tradition, 173
 Primordial Inhabitant, 150
 primordiality, 46
 prostitute, 150, 152
 prostitution, 144
 Protestant Dutch, 82
 Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), 25
 Pundato, Dimas., 86, 116
 Pundato-Lucman group, 86
 Punjab, 6-7, 11, 18, 21, 35-38, 170, 178, 216,
 264-269
 Puthia Pathai, 233
 Puyuma, 149
 Rabita, 121
 race, iii, viii, 113, 126-130, 135, 137-138, 186, 219,
 257
 racial, iv, ix, 5, 128, 130, 137, 139-140, 226
 racial riot, 132, 134, 137-138, 232
 racism, 9, 127-128, 215, 228, 241
 racist, iii, 209, 214, 216, 221, 242
 Ragavan, 232
 Rajaratna, K.M.P., 221
 Rajput, 170
 Ramachandran, M.G., 241
 Ranchi, 264
 Rangoon, 73, 89
 Rama, King., 77
 Rao, N.T. Rama., 167
 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), 165-167,
 169, 174, 262-263
 Ratnasabapathy, 238-239
 Real, Isidro., 122
 Reddy, 170
 Regional Consultative Commission (RCC), 123
 regionalism, 56, 75
 Republic of Pattani, 85
 Republican Constitution, 196-197, 203, 260, 274
 Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), 240
 Revolutionary Communist League (RCL), 203
 Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of East
 Timor, 75
 Revolutionary Government of the Republic of
 Indonesia (PRRI), 74
 Romulo, Ricardo., 122
 Roy Burman, 58
 Royal Thai Opium Monopoly, 156
 rubber, 77, 128-129, 131, 218, 220, 223
 Rukai, 149
 Sabah, 83, 88, 90, 118, 286
 Sabaragamuwa, 222, 223
 Sabillilah Group, 86
 Saisiat, 149
 Salam, Hashim., 86-87, 116, 120
 Sama, 115
 Samarakkody, Edmund., 195
 Samasamajist, 195, 205, 219, 222, 240
 Sandinista government, 92
 Sansoni Commission, 272
 Santal Parganas, 48
 Santhal Insurrection, 48
 Santhals, 47-48
 Sarawak, 286
 Sathiyaseelan, 231
 Satun, 77, 79
 Saudi Arabia, 40, 83, 86, 89, 174-175
 Saul, J., 128
 Savarkar, 177
 Scheduled Caste, 172, 263

- secession, 74, 78, 112, 121, 181, 184, 187-188, 197, 200-203, 225, 244, 249, 255
- secessionism, 100
- secessionist, 2, 82, 85, 105, 198, 201, 255
- secular, 16-17, 26, 29-34, 38, 40, 42, 46, 48, 52, 55, 61, 176-178, 196, 198-199, 248, 250, 252, 258, 261-262, 268, 286
- secularism, 20, 28-29, 38, 163, 165-166, 176, 179, 257, 285
- secularist, 249
- self-determination, iv, v, 82, 85, 90, 95, 100-101, 104-105, 109-110, 122, 181, 184, 187-188, 198-199, 202-203, 205-206, 241, 243, 255, 278
- self-government, 278
- Semitise, 20
- Senanayake, D.S., 186, 194, 218-219
- Senegal, 82-83
- Senghor, President Leopold., 82
- separatism, 23, 54, 63, 71, 78, 80-81, 84, 86, 91, 169
- separatist, 19, 55, 60-61, 76, 79-82, 84-85, 88-89, 91-92, 98-100, 105, 279
- separatist groups, 79, 82, 85, 87
- sexual inequality, 155
- Shah, Ghanshyam., 166
- Shahabuddin, Syed., 177
- Shakir, Moin., 263
- Shan, 72-74, 81, 83-84, 89, 91
- Shan State Army (SSA), 74, 87, 92
- Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), 73
- Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), 87
- Shanker, 239
- Sharad Pawar Cong-S, 171
- Shariah Court, 122
- Shariat, 175
- Shastri, L.B., 258
- shifting cultivation, 131, 155-156, 158-159
- Shiite, 15, 40
- Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), 265-266
- Shiv Sena, 39, 172, 263
- Shivji, Issa., 138
- Shun, Emperor., 160
- Shwetalk., Sao, 89
- Siddhu, 48
- Sikhism, 38, 264
- Sindhi-Baluchi Pushton Front (SBP Front), 182
- Singh, Charan, 170
- Singh., Giani Zail., 266
- Sinhala Buddhist, 20
- Sinhala Maha Sabha, 218, 257, 258
- Sinhala only, 188-191, 196, 201, 220-221, 226, 259
- Sinhala Only Act, 203, 259
- Srima-Shastri Pact, 258
- Siriwardena, Reggie., 215
- SLFP-LSSP-CP United Front, 195
- Smith, Anthony., 181, 182
- Smith, Prof. W.C., 169
- socialism, 13, 72, 79, 92, 207-208, 218, 234, 238-239, 244, 278
- socialist, iv, 4, 7, 12, 33, 78-79, 166, 168, 179, 184-185, 188-190, 196, 198-199, 207-208, 237-240, 242, 244-245, 262, 278, 281
- Sodhi, S.S., 269
- Soekarno, President., 75
- Solanki, Madhav Singh., 172
- Somalia, 83
- Soulbury Constitution, 183
- South Korea, 279
- South Moluccan Republic (RMS), 75, 82, 85
- South Siam, 78
- South Sulawesi, 74
- South Yemen, 169
- Southern Fukian, 151
- Southern Philippines Development Authority, 122
- Southern Province, 222-223
- Soviet Union, iv, 90, 168, 239
- Spain, 110, 114
- Spanish Cortes, 101
- Special Task Forces, 273
- Sri Lanka (see Ceylon, Lanka), vii, viii, ix, 4-9, 11, 22-23, 26, 35-36, 168, 196-197, 200, 207, 213-216, 220-222, 226-229, 232, 238-239, 240, 242-243, 244, 248-259, 271-274, 279
- Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), 189, 191, 194, 196-198, 202-203, 204-205, 214-215, 218, 227, 242, 244, 257-259
- Sri Lanka Mahajana Pakshaya (SLMP), 216, 241, 242-243
- Sri Sabaratnam, 237
- St. Xaviers College, 178
- standardisation, 201, 222, 230-231
- Stanislaus (Saravan), Patrick., 232
- State Economic Development Corporations, 138
- Statesman, 267
- Stevenson Restriction Scheme, 131
- Strauss, Levi., 155
- struggle, iii, vii, 4, 206-208, 219-230, 237, 287; aborigines, 152; agrarian, 58; anti-authoritarian, 244; anti-British, 73; armed, 74, 99, 199, 201, 233, 234; class, vii, 53-55, 63, 131-132, 134, 240, 242-243; ethnic, ix; freedom, 165, 189; liberation, 183, 237; militant mass, 48; minority, 1, 10; Moro, 122; national, 185, 208; nationalist, 182, 206, 238, 278; nationalist liberation, 238; peasant, 52; political, 138; secessionist, 91; separatist, 92; social, 138; worker, 132
- Student Christian Movement, 203
- Sudan, 169
- Suharto, 76, 89
- Sultan Kudarat, 118
- Sulu, 76, 110-111, 113-114, 118-119, 122
- Sumatra, 74-75, 114

- Sundar, 231
 Supreme Council of the United Hill Peoples, 74
 Surendra, Lawrence., vii, x
 Swatantra Party, 166
 swiddening, 156
 Syria, 83
- Tadem, Eduardo., 286
 Tadtad, 118
 Tagalog, 99
 Tagore, R., 12
 Taipei, 150
 Taiwan, ix, 143–146, 148–149, 151–154, 286
 Tambiah, S.J., 287
 Tamil Congress (TC), 186, 188, 197–198, 204, 229
 Tamil Eelam, 198–199, 202, 219, 244
 Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO),
 229, 231–235, 237
 Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act, 194
 Tamil Nadu, 164, 173, 178, 199, 214, 233
 Tamil New Tigers (TNT), 232
 Tamil United Front (TUF), 231
 Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), 10,
 197–199, 202, 204, 215, 227–231, 240–241, 243
 Tang, Yin-sun., 150
 Tanzania, 59, 138
 Tapp, Nicholas., 286
 Tarkunde, V.M., 267
 Tatad, Fransisco., 121
 Tau, 149
 Tausug, 76, 86, 112, 115–116
 Tawi-Tawi, 118–119, 121
 tea, 218–219, 223
 technocratic programme, 95
 Telugu Desam Party, 167
 Ternate, 75
 terrorism, 23–24, 26, 42, 214–215, 228, 230–233,
 252, 267–268, 270;
 guerilla, 251; state, 200, 248, 251
 terrorist, 27, 32, 36, 202, 241–242, 251, 267–268,
 271
 Terrorist-Affected Areas Bill, 267
 Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts)
 Ordinance, 267
 textile industry, 37
 Thackeray, Bal., 177
 Thai Communist Party, 83
 Thailand, 71, 77–80, 82–85, 91, 155–159, 161, 169
 Thangathurai, 231–232
 Thangathurai-Kuttimani group, 232
 Thao, 149
 Thapar, Romila., 256
 Thimpu Talks, 202, 228, 240, 242
 Third World, iv, vii, viii, 2, 8–9, 12, 18, 28, 37–38,
 45–46, 49–50, 61–62, 64, 96, 100, 109, 127, 201,
 208, 227, 235, 242, 244, 278, 282–283, 286–287
 Thondaman, 227, 260
- Tidore, 75
 Times of India, 167, 174, 266
 Timorese Democratic People's Association
 (APODETI), 75
 tin, 128–129, 131
 Tinggian, 97
 Tiro, Hassan Muhammed., 75
 Tiro, Teungku Chik di., 75
 TISCO, 57
 Torrens Title, 102, 130
 tourism, 158, 222, 261
 tourist industry, 158
 trade union, 203–204, 227, 241, 261
 Trade Union Advisor for Malaya (TUAM), 132
 transnationalism, 216
 Treaty of Paris, 110
 tribal, viii, 1, 3, 11, 31, 34, 48, 56–59, 70, 86, 95, 98,
 100, 102, 104, 113, 158, 170–171, 254–255, 261,
 279, 286
 tribe, 22, 47, 56, 73, 81, 91, 101, 144, 149
 Trincomalee, 186, 188, 190, 200, 206, 225
 Tripoli Agreement, 83, 86, 88, 118–120, 123
 Trotskyite, 203, 206
 Tsarisan, 149
 Tsou, 149
 Tugung, Albert Ulama., 118
 Turko-Afghan, 50
- Uganda, 169
 United Bond, 195–196, 203, 260
 United Kingdom (UK, see Britain), 38, 238
 United Malays National Organisation (UMNO),
 134, 136–138
 United Muslim Party, 54
 United National Party (UNP), 186–189, 194–196,
 198, 200, 202, 204, 214–215, 218–219, 223,
 226–228, 229, 244, 258, 260
 United Nations, v, 78, 82, 84, 90, 121
 United Nations Declaration of Indigenous
 Rights, 104
 United Nations General Assembly, 76
 United Nations University (Asian Perspectives
 Project), 280
 United Nations Working Group on Indigenous
 Peoples, v
 United Pattani Freedom Movement, 86
 United States (USA, see America), iv, 9, 38,
 76–77, 84, 90, 92, 101, 103, 111, 114, 148, 214,
 233, 248, 273, 279
 Universal Declaration of Indigenous Rights, v
 University of Ceylon, 202;
 Sri Lanka, 196; the Philippines, 77
 Urban Development Authority (UDA), 138
 Urdu, 50–51
 Uttar Pradesh, 170, 174
 Uva, 195, 222, 225

- Vaddukoddai, 197
 Valvettithurai (VIT), 230–232, 234
 Vanniasingam, 188
 Varathan, 231
 Vasudeva, 242
 Vatican, 114
 Vavuniya, 200
 Vedic era, 256
 Vickremabahu, 242
 Viduthalai Iyakam, 231
 Viet Minh, 158
 Vietnam, 155, 169, 234
 Visayas, 114
 Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), 164, 174, 177, 262–263
 Vittachi, Tarzie., 271
 Vokaligga, 170

 Waimin, 81
 Wallerstein, Immanuel., 207–208
 Wankar, 172
 War, 233, 273;
 Aceh, 75; American civil, 37;
 American–Indian, 114; Anglo–Burmese, 73;
 Cold, 148; colonial, 115; civil, vii, 214, 227,
 242, 243, 244, 259, 287; guerilla, 75, 132,
 206; Indo–Pakistan, 164, 258; Korean, 220;
 Liberation, 233; Second World War, iv, 73,
 108, 132, 146; Sino–Indian, 164
 Warren, Bill., 253
 Was, 81
 Weber, 126
 West Bengal, 54

 West Java, 74
 West New Guinea, 74
 Western Province, 217, 223
 white revolution, 21
 Win, Gen. Ne., 73
 Wolf, Eric, 148
 Wong, 144
 worker, 2, 5, 188, 203;
 plantation, 5, 186, 188, 194–195, 200, 203, 253,
 257–258, 272
 working class, 5–6, 34, 39, 54, 57, 62, 96, 131–132,
 153, 198, 218–220, 222, 227, 240–240
 World Bank, 33, 104, 279
 world economic system, 158, 161
 world market, 53, 157
 World Muslim League, 89, 120

 Yadava, 170–171
 Yakan, 112
 Yala, 77, 79
 Yamato, iii
 Yami, 149–150, 153
 Young Turk, 137
 Youth Congress, 184–185
 Yugoslavia, iv

 Zambia, 59, 62
 Zamboanga, 118, 121;
 del Norte, 118; del Sur, 118
 Zamindars, 50, 52–53
 Zawawi, Ibrahim., 285
 Zimbabwe, 234
 Zionism, vii