

Book Review

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Conflict and Violence in South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, K M de Silva (ed), Kandy, ICES, 2000.

Conflict and Violence in South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka is a recent publication of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) edited by its Executive Director K M de Silva, Professor Emeritus of the University of Peradeniya. The chapters in this volume examine a variety of protracted conflicts involving issues common to four of the main states of South Asia—Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. In most of the separatist struggles reviewed in the volume, there are complications caused by external forces. Other conflicts stem from some of the most divisive issues in the region. The conflicts have been classified into three categories; namely those based on religious strife, those on social conflicts and on separatism. All the chapters written by specialists contain fresh insights and new data.

Religious Strife

In this collection of eight case studies of conflicts in South Asia, the first one by Mohammad Waseem deals with "Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan." At the time of independence, Waseem points out that there was no conflict between Islam and the kind of secularism and democracy espoused by the founder father Jinnah. Islam was seen as the only visible means of national integration in a Pakistan composed of five main ethnic groups—the Punjabis, the Sindhs, the Pathans, the Balochis and the Mohajirs (the Urdu-speaking refugees from India). Waseem explains why Islam, though the *raison d'être* for the new state, failed to integrate these ethnic groups into one nation due to the existence of provincial identities. Once the fear of a Hindu majority was overcome in post-partition Pakistan and the centre composed largely of migrant leadership, established dominance over the provinces, there was a re-emergence of ethno-linguistic and sectarian identities. However, the Punjabis and the Mohajirs continued to uphold their Islamic identity. Waseem does not lay much stress on the role of the Punjabis in the politics of Pakistan. Their domination of the civilian bureaucracy, the military and the economy was detrimental to the interests of the other ethnic groups. All legitimate grievances of the lesser privileged and lesser-developed ethnic groups were dubbed as anti-national and subversive activities. This was an important factor that caused sectarian conflict. Waseem stresses that the core sectarian conflicts in Pakistan revolve around the Shia-Sunni divide. The other sectarian conflicts, intended to excommunicate certain marginal sects, were overwhelmingly unequal in nature. Waseem explains that the sectarian leaders do not typically represent their followers in mainstream politics. In political matters, Pakistanis follow their local or tribal leaders. The militant sectarian activists themselves represent only a minority group which draws on Madrasahs (Islamic schools) and shrines. It is significant that funds are provided to them by the commercial middle class. Waseem refers to the successive waves of violent clashes that occurred in the 1990s between the followers of different Islamic sects and sub-sects in Pakistan. He mentions that there had been violent clashes between the Shias and Sunnis in the preceding four decades.

Waseem points out that the compulsions of a democratic electorate, including demands for provincial autonomy, were as important a factor in the rise of Islamic assertiveness and the eruption of sectarian violence as the entry of fundamentalist views from the Islamic world outside Pakistan, particularly Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. Apart from sectarianism on religious grounds, the other major divisive issue has been the position of Islam in the constitutional and political life of Pakistan. Although Pakistan has considered itself an Islamic republic since the promulgation of the 1956 constitution, there are large and influential segments of the elite which are committed to secularism. This secularist-modernist group made attempts to accommodate some of the demands of the Islamicist lobby and has succeeded in diluting them in the course of political and constitutional practices. This has resulted in the Islamicist lobby being given a prominence in public life that its electorate base would hardly justify. The process of democratisation in Pakistan in the late 1980s and 1990s has shown that sectarian politics has only a meagre footing in electoral politics. Waseem does not refer to the current efforts of the military regime, headed by Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf, to create conditions for the restoration of democracy which provide the best hope against the destabilising effects of sectarian conflict.

The second study on religious strife by Partha S Ghosh is in "Hindu-Muslim Conflicts in India: Confrontation and Co-existence." Ghosh explains Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India, as an ongoing saga of conflict and co-operation, in a plural society. He sees the need to study Hindu-Muslim relations within the overall framework of religion's role in politics. He points out that despite Muslim domination over parts of India covering seven-and-a-half centuries, there had been experiences of both conflicts and co-existence between the majority Hindus and the minority Muslims. While the conflicts were generally of a political nature confined to the political circles, the co-existential intercourse was at the societal level and hence broad-based. This co-existential relationship continued until the period of British rule. The interferences of the British East India Company in Hindu religious matters contributed to Hindu-Muslim unity which resulted in the revolt of 1857. Thereafter the British government, the company's successor, decided not to interfere with the organised religions of India. Ghosh then explains that the process of building India's national philosophy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The advantage taken by the Hindus of the modernisation of Indian society, at the expense of the Muslims, caused a Hindu-Muslim cleavage which the British government exploited to its advantage. By the first decade of the 20th century, Hindu-Muslim antagonism became a permanent fixture in India politics. The Muslim League formed in 1906 demanded separate electorates for the Muslims, while in retaliation the Hindu nationalist Arya Samaj set up the Punjab Hindu Sabhas (1907-09). Meanwhile, the Indian National Congress identified itself with both Hindus and Muslims. This equi-proximity communal strategy of the Congress was strengthened by the entry of Mohandas Gandhi on the political scene in 1915 and resulted in the Congress signing the Lucknow Pact in 1916 and the subsequent joint participation of both Congress and the Muslim groups in the Khilafat movement (1919-21). This marginalised the Hindu communalists for the time being. The Khilafat bonhomie was short-lived and the conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League thereafter reached a point of no return, largely due to independence being imminent. The conflicting national strategies of the two parties widened the gap. Congress was in favour of a rapid transfer of power while the League demanded constitutional protection for the Muslims first, despite the grant of separate electorates to the Muslims in the 1932 communal award. Despite the partition of India and the ensuing violence causing tremendous loss of life and property, the progressive leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru resulted in a very large proportion of the pre-partition Muslim community choosing to live in India. The Congress party emphasised that India was one nation in which the Hindus and Muslims were partners in national progress.

Ghosh speaks of the "many ups and downs" of Hindu-Muslim relations in post independence India. Ghosh makes the point that despite representation of Muslims in all walks of life including the highest political and judicial positions, their representation in the professions and jobs was poor. Ghosh also noted that the Muslims were less educated than their Hindu counterparts and that there

was no Muslim entrepreneurial class of any significance. Ghosh then goes on to discuss Hindu-Muslim relations, during the Nehruvian period and post-Nehruvian. Nehru dealt with the deteriorating Hindu-Muslim relationship by adopting a policy of bi-communalism, of identifying Congress with both Hindu and Muslim interests. The Congress saw to it that important Muslim leaders were elected to Parliament. There was non-interference with Muslim religious and customary beliefs and practices. The policy of secularism adopted by the Congress was not one of non-interference in religious matters but rather one of showing equal respect to all religions and religious beliefs. It reflected the post-1857 British wisdom of not meddling in religious matters to ensure political stability. Nehru succeeded in capturing the Hindu nationalist platform at the micro-level. After Nehru there was a strategic shift. Indira Gandhi wanted to champion the Hindu cause at the macro-level since she desired to project India as a great power particularly *vis-à-vis* Pakistan. Rajiv Gandhi continued this political strategy that he had inherited. Ghosh points out that this policy of bi-communalism failed because of its inherent contradictions and that Hindu-Muslim relations deteriorated after Nehru's death. He refers to Hindu-Muslim riots in leading urban centres after the Babri mosque demolition in December 1992. Ghosh bemoans the visible erosion of secularism in India and the failure of the state's law and order machinery to act as an impartial arbiter in communal matters, with even the political leadership appearing to connive with the Hindu fanatics. Ghosh argues that the Hindus alone cannot be blamed for Hindu-Muslim conflicts, since the lack of pragmatism by the Muslim leadership was a contributory factor. Ghosh suggests that the eruption of Islamic assertiveness among the Muslims of India, after the relative quiescence of the early post-colonial decades, could be an expression of the fundamentalism in many parts of the Islamic world.

Ghosh speaks of Muslim politics being at the crossroads, since it has polarised between the traditionalists and the modernists. He adds, that both groups seek to align with secularist forces. He points out that despite the rise of the chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), there are millions of Hindus and Muslims working closely in Indian villages and towns to build an India which would be democratic and plural. He refers to the realisation by the Vajpayee government that its Hindutva ideology has become a liability, particularly due to the BJP's current dependence on other political parties. He talks of the BJP projecting itself as a party willing to accommodate all religious groups with the Muslims figuring prominently. Ghosh ends his essay on the optimistic note that India would develop into a civil society where there would be no discrimination based on one's faith.

Social Conflicts

Ajay Mehra has contributed two chapters dealing with social conflicts peculiar to India. Chapter three deals with "Caste Conflict in India" while Chapter five deals with "Naxalism and Militant Peasant Movements in India." The caste system in India is a phenomenon which is not only fascinating but intensely puzzling to those outside. Mehra describes caste as a system of social stratification, which has withstood change for centuries and which has been a source of social conflict over the years; conflict has been inherent and ingrained in the iniquitous social-economic structure of the Indian caste system. Mehra points out that the traditional social structure also develops systems of managing, if not resolving, conflict. The caste system based on four *varnas* (colours) was devised by the Aryans. It consisted of the *brahmins* (priests), the *kshatryas* (warriors and aristocracy) and the *vaishyas* (cultivators and merchants). The non-Aryan *dasas* and those of mixed Aryan—*dasa* origin formed the fourth *varna* called the *shudras*. Those outside the *varna* system have been variously called the 'untouchables,' scheduled castes (by the British) *harijans* meaning children of God (by Gandhi) or *dalits* as they called themselves. The inequalities of the system were seen in the treatment of the *dalits* who lived in servitude and virtual bondage. The caste system underwent change as new groups kept arriving in India. Mehra also shows that the caste system is now not as rigid as made out, since the more important factor was *jati* (the social unit to which one is born). Some of the *jatits* have improved their status through imitation of high caste practice or by moving from one area to another. This process has been called 'Sanskritisation.' The majority of *dalits* have not availed themselves of this limited

option and those who did have confronted systemic opposition and violence directed at them by the upper castes. This is described in detail by Mehra. He provides the reasons why the *dalits* are most vulnerable to violence despite constitutional and legal rights protecting their rights (protective discrimination), which are largely due to Gandhi's countrywide campaign against untouchability and the key role played by *dalit* leader B R Ambedkar in the drafting of the Indian Constitution. Land related conflict has been identified as the most important cause. The very slow change in India's power structure and efforts by *dalits* to assert themselves by organising themselves politically have been other important factors.

Mehra states that the rise of middle or intermediary castes in India has had a significant impact on caste conflict in India. He then explains that the middle castes, intermediary castes or other backward castes (OBCs) have been terms used for castes or *jatis* coming under the fourth *varna* system. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s were crucial for the rise of middle castes since the backward caste movements picked up in several parts of India and emerged as important political forces. Due to the representation of many of these parties in the Janata Party which came to power in 1977, they launched political agitations for protective discrimination resulting in the setting up of the Mandal Commission. The commission identified 3,248 castes or communities as OBCs, accounting for 52.4% of India's population (350 million according to 1931 census and 524 million in 2000). The commission made the controversial recommendation that 27% of government jobs be reserved for OBCs, in addition to the 22% quota for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. These recommendations were not taken up for immediate implementation, mainly because of their controversial nature. Mehra then describes the anti-reservation violence in different parts of the country. He provides a case study of Bihar, because it presents types of caste conflicts not found elsewhere and since nowhere else does caste conflict overlap with class conflict. In conclusion, Mehra says that the increasing caste violence does not mean that internally and externally class structures and caste identities are becoming more rigid. He also suggests that in the study of caste conflicts, it is important to look into peculiarities inherent in different states and cultural regions, since specific socio-cultural and political peculiarities give their own colour to caste conflicts. Though economic reasons are important in aggravating caste conflicts, Mehra cautions that stress should not be placed on the caste and class controversy.

In Chapter 5 on "Naxalism and Militant Peasant Movements in India," Mehra sees a link between radical agrarian agitation among the *dalits* and political violence in movements such as the Naxalite campaigns. In the post-1967 period, Naxalism inspired by Mao and Marxism-Leninism, demonstrated a particular kind of militant and violent armed struggle by the peasants. It was given its name by the Naxalite uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal, in 1967. But despite periods of co-operation and co-ordination, the movement had not been unified in the different parts of India it operated in. Mehra makes the point that peasant uprisings did take place in the late Mughal period and during British colonial rule. Congress included land reform in its programme, due to the mass support of the poorer rural sections and landless labourers. The failure of the Congress government to effect meaningful land reform, kept peasant movements both peaceful and militant, alive even after independence. Mehra then explains the nature of the main communist-led peasant movements in India such as the Telangana movement (beginning in 1944), the Naxalite uprising in 1967 and the Srikakulam movement in Andhra Pradesh (1965-75). During the mid and late 1960, the strength of these radical agrarian movements meant not only a threat to law and order but to the stability of the state itself. The state repression during the national emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975 played an important role in the complete crushing of the Naxalite movement. However agrarian radicalism has not disappeared. Mehra says that there has been a period of Naxalism in the 1980s and 1990s and that it has consolidated itself along certain pockets in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Mehra points out that unless the Naxalite movement makes itself relevant and representative in character, it will remain a potential source of conflict without any substantive impact on the Indian political system.

The fourth chapter is on "Vicissitudes of the People's Liberation Front: Insurrections in Sri Lanka" by G H Peiris. It deals with the two outbreaks of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) led

violence; the first in 1971 and the more destructive one in 1987-90. The paradoxes of these situations are explained and analysed by the author. The JVP insurrection of 1971 was caused by the youth unrest of the 1960s and was Sri Lanka's first experience of systemic violence in politics. According to available figures, of the 10,192 persons incarcerated during and after this insurrection, 97.6% were Sinhalese and 94.3% were Buddhists. In describing the events leading up to it, Peiris explains how Rohana Wijeweera and his JVP followers converted a political movement for economically deprived and politically alienated segments of the Sinhalese population into a programme of action in 1967. The failure of the United Front (UF) government which assumed office in 1970, to implement its election pledge of bringing about a socialist transformation of society, was the main cause for the insurrection of April 1971. After its suppression, the government undertook a programme to rehabilitate those JVP cadres taken into custody. The United National Party (UNP) victory at the Parliamentary election in 1977 saw the release of JVP members in prison. This resulted in the JVP's participation in mainstream politics and Wijeweera unsuccessfully contested the 1982 Presidential elections receiving just 250,000 votes. Peiris describes the return of the JVP to insurrectionary politics after this election and the subsequent referendum which extended the tenure of the existing parliament. This resulted in the riots following the peace accord signed with India in July 1987 and the subsequent induction of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. There was another insurrectionary offensive based on an outburst of anti-government and anti-Indian sentiments among the Sinhalese, with the principal theme of JVP propaganda being "betrayal of motherland" in the period from July 1987 until mid-1989. The most potent weapon was the "curfew" which brought all formal economic activities to a standstill. A large number of political activists were killed. There were also killings for which the JVP was held responsible, but done by others engaged in personal and political vendettas. Peiris explains that the government failed to prevent the JVP building up its armed strength in the period 1986-89. President Premadasa (who was elected in January 1989) made overtures for a reconciliation but it produced no response from the JVP, whose violence continued undiminished. At the end of July 1989, the JVP made the fatal blunder of issuing an ultimatum to the security forces, to either join them in the insurrection or face annihilation. The ensuing government offensive resulted in the capture and liquidation of almost all JVP leaders by the end of January 1990. Peiris then goes on to examine the "conventional" explanation for the insurrection such as economic change and youth unrest, governance and youth unrest, the sociological perspectives and socio-psychological perspectives of the insurrection. The author makes the point that the elimination of the leaders of the second JVP insurrection was welcomed by the large majority of Sri Lankan people. In a postscript, he states that the return of the JVP to the political mainstream was largely due to the initiatives of a small group of highly committed JVP activists. A movement of protest against the multi-farious violations of civil rights during the insurrection, which the opposition parties including the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) used as a means of gaining electoral support, helped in the JVP's rehabilitation. Significantly, many rank and file JVP members were absorbed into the People's Alliance (PA) fold. It is even more significant that Peiris has pointed out that the osmosis from the JVP into the PA/SLFP fold was not confined to the latter's lower strata but also to the highest levels of the present Kumaratunga administration.

Separatism

In the section on separatist conflicts, Chapter six by Aftab Ahmed is on "Bangladesh: Ethnic Turmoil in the Chittagong Hill Tracts." The chapter deals with the problems faced by the *Pahadees*, a conglomerate of 14 ethnic communities or tribes including the *Chakmas*, living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). It is significant that while CHT forms 9% of Bangladesh's land area, the population is only 1% composed predominantly of Buddhists. The major problem confronting this region arose on the eve of decolonisation and the eventual partition of India. Ahmed described the inconclusive discussions of the *Pahadee* leaders with the Indian Congress leadership on their future, prior to CHT being awarded to Pakistan by the Radcliffe Commission. In this award, the fact that the CHT population had greater affinity with the people of north-east India was ignored. The probable reason was that the whole

economic life of CHT depended on East Bengal. Nevertheless, the award was unacceptable to the extremists of the Jana Samiti, the leading political organisation in CHT founded in 1916. This group came to be identified as pro-Indian elements of the CHT but their efforts to resist CHT's incorporation in Pakistan failed. Thereafter, the Pakistan government adopted a policy of making efforts to co-opt the ethnic communities in the broader "national" framework. The Kaptai Hydroelectric Plant (KHP), which was constructed by setting up a dam at Kaptai on the Karnaphuli river resulted in the displacement of 18,000 families (100,000 persons) of whom 90% were Chakmas. The growing discontent and indignation of the *Pahadees* led to serious ethnic tension. The majority of them remained passive throughout the nine months of the Bangladesh liberation war. In 1972 a new leadership emerged in CHT with Manabendra forming the JSS (Parbatiya Chattagam Janasamhati Samiti), which provided a broad forum for both the radicals and nationalists of CHT. Ahmed explains how after the Bangladesh liberation, the Mujib government failed to respond to the concerns of the *Pahadees* with regard to safeguarding their distinct identity rights, and privileges. Mujib gave top priority to the question of political integration and his declaration that the *Pahadees* have been "promoted to (the ranks of the) Bangalees" caused resentment and indignation among the *Pahadees*. They feared that their right to exist as free communities was under threat. General Zia who succeeded Mujib rejected the autonomy demand of the JSS and pursued a tougher policy against the Shanti Bahini (SB), the armed wing of the JSS formed in 1973. There was the settlement of 30,000 Bengali families in CHT in 1980 and plans to settle an additional 500,000 persons to act as a countervailing force to the *Pahadees*. The Ershad government intensified the settlement programme and also increased the government's military presence in the CHT region thereby causing further resentment. Meanwhile the Bangladesh government also tried to accelerate economic development in CHT in order to bring the *Pahadees* "into the mainstream." The insurrectionary activities of the JSS/SB against the government increased towards the end of 1974, with reports of assistance by the Indian intelligence bureau, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). In response, the Bangladesh military authorities launched massive combing operations against the insurgents. The attempts by successive Bangladesh regimes to either pacify or suppress the tribal insurrections led by the SB failed to bring about a lasting change until 1997. Ahmed then goes on to explain the efforts made by the Bangladesh government to negotiate a settlement with the CHT insurgents. This eventually led to an agreement in 1998, the implementation of which will be difficult since the necessary preconditions for peace and a political settlement have to be created first. This will tax to the utmost the political and administrative skills of all segments of Bangladesh's leadership. A real halt to more immigration from outside CHT would be a good starting point. A consensus among all political parties in Bangladesh is a must for a solution to the CHT issue.

Chapter seven by Mahendra P Lama is on "Separatism and Armed Conflicts in North-East India." Lama analyses three conflicts involving the Nagas, the Assamese and Gorkhas in which the issue is the protection of group identities. It ranges from the Nagas' demand for a separate state, to a more limited quest for autonomy within West Bengal for the Gorkhas (Nepali-speaking people) in the Darjeeling area, and the resistance of the Assamese against the demographic pressures they face from across boundaries of the state. The heart of the problem was the migration of Bengali-speaking groups, both Hindu and Muslim, from densely populated parts of Eastern India and the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) into relatively under-populated Assam and neighbouring states in north east India. Lama explains how these voluntary population shifts which have continued even after India's independence, have kept the Indian security forces busy for several decades. In addition to an independent Nagaland, the leadership of the movement have demanded the return of the Naga-speaking areas in the neighbouring Indian states like Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, and even those located in independent Myanmar (Burma). The Gorkhas want the creation of a distinct political entity for them. In Assam, the problem of "foreign" national and unchecked immigration has been the principal stimulus behind the violent political upheavals. The major communal disturbances that rocked East Pakistan during 1947-52 and 1964-65 had compelled a large number of refugees to go across to Assam. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) which came into prominence in the late

1970s and the early 1980s projected the issue of foreigners on the national agenda by skilfully exploiting the apprehensions and grievances of the Assamese people on the unchecked entry of outsiders into the state.

The Indian government has signed accords in the hope of resolving these various conflicts. The Shillong Accord (1975) with the Nagas, the Assam Accord (1985) with the Assamese and the Gorkha Accord (1988) with the Gorkhas have largely failed despite the initial euphoria generated by these "negotiated settlements." With the failure of these accords, the insurrectionary and separatist movements have been resurrected in a more violent and complex form. Despite the continuation of violence, Lama points out that there has been a smooth functioning of the processes of democratic participation in politics. The Indian government has resorted to several techniques of management in handling the separatist movements, apart from repressive action when these threaten the integrity of the Indian Union, either internally or externally. One method has been to create more states in the north-east. At present there are seven of them, the "seven sisters" of India's north-east as they are called. Ironically, even within these states there are separatist movements seeking the creation of more states. As already seen, the other technique of the government signing accords with the dissidents has failed to meet the challenges posed by separatist agitation. Lama sees one "silver lining" in the capacity of the democratic process to accommodate some of the dissident leaders in mainstream politics.

The last chapter in the volume by the editor K M de Silva is on "Separatism and Political Violence in Sri Lanka." de Silva, a Sri Lankan analyst of global ethnic conflict, describes the emergence of a separatist movement in Sri Lanka involving the minority Tamil community and its transformation from what was relatively peaceful agitation in the 1960s and early 1970s to its present position of being an extra-ordinary violent struggle with regional ramifications. In doing so de Silva discusses in detail the historical reasons behind the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. While explaining the nature of the separatist agitation of a section of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, de Silva nevertheless stresses that Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka ranks as one of the thwarted separatisms in South Asia. He also says that a striking feature of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka, compared to contemporary separatist movements in Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines, was its late development taking nearly 25 years to develop into a full-pledged separatist movement. This agitation went through three stages. In the mid-1950s and early 1960s, the avowed objectives of the agitation were greater autonomy for a region inhabited by Tamils within the Sri Lanka polity. The agitation moved on to the conversion of Sri Lanka's unitary political structure to a federal or quasi-federal one. The failure of this agitation at these two levels led to the present armed struggle for a separate state conducted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In discussing the earliest form of Tamil separatism between 1948 and 1955, de Silva considers geography and demography as important factors, due to the Jaffna peninsula's proximity to Tamil Nadu and the common ethnic identity. However, he sees the essential and initial stimulus to the growth of Tamil separatism being provided by internal factors in Sri Lanka rather than separatism in South India. de Silva sees the maturation of Tamil separatism in the 1970s as a response to the 1972 Republican Constitution, which reflected the Sinhala linguistic nationalism that dominated Sri Lankan politics since 1956. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in its Vaddukodai Resolution of 1976 demanded Tamil Eelam (a separate state). This demand for "traditional homelands" was based on the Cleghorn minute, which de Silva has shown is historically inaccurate. The university admission issue, based on standardisation and the district quota system, was perceived by the Tamils as reducing their prospects of state employment. This caused grievances and led to the radicalisation of politics in Jaffna. He quite rightly points out that the Tamil political parties' lack of political patronage was the real cause rather than the policy of discrimination. Unfortunately, the increasing turbulent politics in the Jaffna peninsula found support in Tamil Nadu. This led to politically conscious smugglers and terrorist groups in the north joining hands, that later led to the rise and dominance of the LTTE.

The two decades after 1977 saw the development of Tamil separatism into a powerful force. The TULF were initially the principal advocates of separatism, which they even pursued from within the Parliament, despite its leader Amirthalingam also being Leader of the Opposition. The extreme and violent Tamil youth groups, which gained respectability in the Tamil electorate through association with the TULF, prevented the latter playing a sedate role in Parliament. Between 1977 and 1986, the TULF gradually lost ground to these groups and in particular to the LTTE. The decline of the TULF was also hastened by the UNP government's ill-advised Sixth Amendment to the Constitution in 1983, which led to TULF MPs refusing to take the oath abjuring the advocacy of separatism, and thereby forfeiting their seats in Parliament. Their subsequent exile to South India, not only established LTTE dominance in the Jaffna peninsula but also facilitated India's direct intervention in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. It further led to the internationalisation of this conflict.

de Silva in describing the ascendancy of the LTTE sees it corresponding to two trends in separatist struggles in many parts of the world. First, the youthful LTTE cadres initially linked in a common political struggle with the TULF, a conventional political party, successfully undermined the leadership of the latter in situations of violent resistance to the Sri Lankan state. Secondly the LTTE which was a small and violent group among separatist agitators and activists, established its supremacy through a ruthless and bloody internecine struggle. The period after the anti-Tamil riots of 1983, is seen by de Silva as a very significant point in Sri Lanka's history. Apart from increased public support for the LTTE, it led to direct Indian intervention. While the support from Tamil Nadu begun in the 1970s became more open, the Indian central government's covert support until 1983 became overt. The Tamil extremist groups including the LTTE were provided sanctuary, training, arms and funds by South India. The Indian central government connived in this but did not officially admit it. In this situation, the LTTE became stronger than what the mentors expected it to be. The Indian government made a mistake similar to its support to the Sikh extremists in the Punjab province. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi first propped up the extreme Sikh leader Bhindranwale as a countervailing force to tackle the growing popularity of the Akali Dal but he was crushed when he turned into an enormously powerful figure with a mind of its own. de Silva sees the Indian central government's role with regard to the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka from the 1980s to the present day, as being more complex than just reacting to the pressures of Tamil Nadu politics. However, Major Shankar Bhaduri and Major General Asfir Karim in their book *The Sri Lankan Crisis* describe India's role as falling within the policy framework of "impact on domestic harmony" linked to Tamil Nadu's ethnic, linguistic and religious ties with the Sri Lankan Tamils. de Silva discusses India's curious role of both being a principal mediator protecting the interests of the Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka and later becoming a combatant to prevent the LTTE establishing a separate Tamil state. The author points out that India failed in its role as mediator in Sri Lanka's conflict and also failed to make the LTTE receptive and subservient to its regional objectives. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 brought about a change in the Indian government's attitude to the LTTE. de Silva explains that the LTTE was able to survive due to its skill in guerrilla tactics, divided counsels within the Indian government, and its optimum use of access to the sea by developing its own merchant fleet. Another key factor was the financial support of the Tamil diaspora in North America and Western Europe. The Tamil diaspora had highly trained and competent professionals, whose propaganda machine, the Sri Lanka government could not match.

The author stresses that the principal source of intractability in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict in regard to Tamil separatism has been indigenous forces, with the LTTE being the most intractable since the mid-1980s. This has been demonstrated in its negotiations with President Premadasa (1989-90) and later with President Kumaratunga in 1994. The LTTE has shown no flexibility and has been unwilling to deviate from its principle of establishing the state of Tamil Eelam despite the willingness of a succession of Sri Lankan governments since the late 1970s to eliminate Tamil grievances of the past. The recent resurgence of the LTTE has had a noticeable effect on Tamil Nadu politicians in the revival

of pro-LTTE sentiment dormant since Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. There has been a call by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi for the partition of Sri Lanka and effusive pro-LTTE sentiment among politicians belonging to parties of the current governing coalition in New Delhi. However, the Vajpayee government has decided that it would not interfere directly in the Sri Lankan conflict and has adopted a more circumspect policy than its predecessors had done in the 1980s. It does not want the establishment of a Tamil state in Sri Lanka and favours greater autonomy to the Tamil areas within a united Sri Lanka. As mentioned earlier, de Silva is confident that the Tamil separatist struggle led by the LTTE, would remain a case of thwarted separatism, due to the general reluctance in South and South East Asia to accept the creation of new sovereign states out of existing entities, with Bangladesh being the sole exception. This is a message that has to be effectively conveyed to the LTTE by the Norwegian facilitator and others having influence over it, so that a way can now be found to end the tragic conflict in Sri Lanka.

The eight studies of conflicts that have been undertaken clearly demonstrate that the process of national integration and the task of nation building in the South Asian countries concerned has proved to be very complex and intractable, even after five decades. It was expected that the process of modernisation in these countries based on policies of economic development, urbanisation, social mobilisation and politicisation would break down and erode, what were at the time of independence, parochial loyalties and fissiparous tendencies. This did not happen. In Pakistan, Islam failed to integrate the five main ethnic groups, due to the re-emergence of ethno-linguistic and sectarian identities. In India, there has been an ongoing saga of both conflict and co-operation between the majority Hindus and the minority Muslims. This together with the caste conflict and the political violence associated with the radical agrarian agitation and Naxalism, have had a negative influence on India's efforts directed towards national integration.

Another important factor why national integration did not take place in the South Asian countries, was the rise of ethno-nationalism and increasing ethnic dissonance, particularly since the 1960s. In Bangladesh, the process of national integration was affected by the ethnic turmoil in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where the *Chakmas* and other tribes have demanded autonomy and even independence. In Sri Lanka, the replacement of pluralism as an essential feature of Sri Lanka's political system by the supposedly more democratic and populist nationalism, eventually led to the current crisis with the LTTE waging war against the Sri Lankan state. There have also been two JVP led insurrections in Sri Lanka against the Sri Lankan state, expressing the frustrations predominantly of alienated and deprived Sinhala youth. However, the return of the JVP to main stream politics recently and the participation of some of their members in the present People's Alliance Government augurs well for Sri Lanka's political future. Such a favourable situation emerging in Sri Lanka, also depends on an acceptable solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, with the LTTE eventually entering the political main stream or being completely annihilated.

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