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NATION BUILDING AND STATE FORMATION IN MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETIES: FOCUS ON SOUTH ASIA

Abstract

One of the most daunting tasks before the post-colonial states in the Third World was to gain viability and legitimacy as independent political entities. For this purpose, the twin tasks of nation building and state formation were high on their agenda. The accomplishment of these tasks required a finer distinction between state formation and nation building in terms of approaches and strategies. But in South Asia, as elsewhere in the Third World, these got blurred and started working at cross-purposes. The reaction and resistance of the minority ethnic, religious and linguistic groups to the homogenisation processes, assimilationist policies and hegemonic approach of the dominant ruling elite, was put down with a heavy hand. Thus, models of nation building are proving to be a big failure. The post-nationalist debate tends to focus upon the ethnicity as the sole factor in nation building process. The conclusion that we can draw is that the whole process of nation building is nowhere near completion. The only thing that we can hope of these societies is that there should be constitutional revisions and reframings, that encourage accommodation and acknowledge rather than assimilation and homogenisation.

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INTRODUCTION

The sense of common nationhood is, perhaps, one of the necessary requirements of the modern states. The colonies that achieved independence as a result of decolonisation process during the nineteenth century in Latin America and the twentieth century in Asia and Africa adopted the model of nation state to organise their political life. While in some cases, certain pre-existing nations were able to form their states and thus configure their national characteristics, most of the other post-colonial states created the state first and then proceeded to build corresponding nationhood out of highly diverse populations. Even the state structures that post-colonial states inherited were virtually saddled with colonial political processes and institutions, and the state boundaries were irrationally demarcated as per the convenience of the colonial masters. In such a situation, the task was difficult and multi-dimensional. In order to gain viability and legitimacy, they had to accomplish the twin tasks of nation building and state formation simultaneously and that too, in the absence of indigenous political processes and institutions which had systematically been done away with by the colonialists. The task of nation building and state building required broad outlook and clear vision on the part of post-colonial ruling elite to persuade, cajole and coerce the populations for state formation and adopt consensual, persuasive and democratic methods to unify and integrate the highly diverse populations. Nevertheless, the colonial structures, institutions, processes and anti-colonial national consciousness came handy to the post-colonial dominant ruling elite to homogenise and assimilate the highly diverse populations in the name of national integration. The European model of national integration was adopted without assessing the peculiar ground realities in this part of the world. The diverse populations were denied recognition, accommodation and/or

representation. Instead they were suppressed into submission through hegemonic approaches, homogenisation processes and assimilationist policies. The post-colonialist era has seen the emergence of ethno-nationalism as the sole factor of group organisation. Keeping this framework in view, an attempt has been made in this paper to analyse diverse strategies, processes and policies adopted by the dominant ruling elite in the post-colonial nation states of South Asia. Attempt has also been made to address: How have the ethnically diverse populations perceived and reacted to these efforts and the state response thereto?

THE HISTORICAL LEGACIES

The efforts at nation building and state building ran parallel with ethnic pulls and pressures from the highly diverse populations in the newly emerged nation states of South Asia. The decline of the ideology of territorial nationalism¹ and the rise of ethno-nationalism have essentially been marked by a set of historical traits: firstly, the in-built weaknesses of the anti-colonial movements, secondly, the colonial legacies haunting these post-colonial nation-states and thirdly, the faltered post-colonial efforts at integrating highly diverse populations.

¹ The Ideology of territorial nationalism denotes that diverse populations in a given territory are integrated together through the ideology of nationalism. The Ideology of nationalism signifies a sense of commonhood based on diverse attributes such as language, religion, race, ethnicity, history so on and so forth. As per David Brown, it was from the late 1960s that the 'state elite' could not maintain balance between the developmental promises and programmes. The masses began to feel insecure and disrupted, therefore, individuals began to look for 'alternative imagined kinship communities' for security and justice. It is here that the territorial nation states lost its appeal and ethnic nationalism has come up to replace it. See David Brown, "Why is the Nation-State so Vulnerable to Ethnic Nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1998, p. 14. Also see Robin Cohan, "Diasporas and the Nation-State: From Victims to Challengers", *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1996, p.517 and Anthony D. Smith, "The Ethnic Source of Nationalism", *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring, 1993, p. 55.

A large number of nation states emerged after decolonisation as territorial political units that have come to play important role in the international system. These nation states had inherited perplexing number of ethnic communities that either did not identify themselves with the dominant core of the national identity. On the other hand, their urge for self-identification and differentiation posed challenge to the dominant community's efforts at nation building and state formation. Most of these nation states are essentially multinational and such plurality and diversity pose challenge to the dominant ruling elites' efforts at nation building and state building. In the past, due to the rise of anti-colonial consciousness, these highly diverse communities had forged united front against the colonialists. But these diverse groups were often separated by ethnic, religious and geographical disparities and had "...their own interests and opinions about the political future of their country".² In a way, the feelings of nationalism aroused during the course of liberation movement "...was not the positive unity of a coherent group but the negative one of the common opposition to the colonial power"³. This anti-colonial united front comprised of Western educated elite of the otherwise diverse communities which brought the masses on a common platform by "...constructing a 'fiction', 'manipulating local protests and groups into concert' with nationalist goals that were not necessarily widespread".⁴ The commonhood was a runaway success in so far as its opposition to colonialists was concerned. But the

² Anders Fonge, "Afghanistan After April 1992 : A Struggle for State and Ethnicity", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.14, No. 1, 1995, p. 17.

³ Subhransushekar Misra "Ethnic Conflict and National Security in Third World", *Mainstream*, 7 October, 1989, p. 15.

⁴ Gerald A. Heeger, *The Politics of Underdevelopment*, New York : St. Martin's Press, 1974, p. 23.

hopes and aspirations of having concessions⁵ in the form of autonomy or to achieve separate statehood remained dormant under the facade of anti-colonial national consciousness. Thus, the nation state that emerged after the decolonisation lacked all the elements of nationhood - common history, common culture, common language etc. except for a common territory and even that had been arbitrarily created by an alien power.⁶

However, the feelings of nationalism in either form (secular or communal), tend to reinforce the 'inspirational identity' and 'integrative elements' of every culture and can help in resolving the conflicts. In this role of reinforcement of cultural values, nationalism draws upon different elements that make up the culture itself. Thus, linguistic, religious, economic and political aspects are all used by nationalists to "nurture, organise and direct nationalism for the fulfillment of the elite ambitions and public aspirations to be prosperous and independent".⁷ But in the post-independence period, the force of nationalism that was once aroused against the colonial rule revealed itself as a device used by dominant ruling elite to seek state power. The post-colonial regimes in a bid to legitimise the political order tried to homogenise the otherwise ethnically fractured populations through the reinforcement of anti-colonial consciousness by invoking certain common attributes. Thus, nationalism emerged as a homogenising element with its insistence on identity likeness as the acid test of belongings and patriotism. The ideal of nation state that it developed became the central object of worship and its ideological base of nationalism as a "mythology

⁵ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1986, p. 4.

⁶ For details see, Robert Scalapino, "Nationalism in Asia: Reality and Myth", *Orbis*, Vol. X, 1967, pp. 1176-1184.

⁷ Iqbal Narain, "Cultural Pluralism, National Integration and Democracy in India", *Asian Survey*, No19, February, 1979, pp. 165-166.

of the masses".⁸ But the unity once formed in the colonial context failed to provide a single 'myth of origin', that includes 'traits' and 'beliefs' with which citizens of the state belonging to diverse communities can identify themselves.⁹ Such an anti-colonial working unity was characteristically unsustainable as the post-colonial period was marked by clash of conflicting identities, struggle for power and resources. As such the conflict between majoritarian nationalism -- that the minority communities upbraid as 'official nationalism' and the separate ethnic identities of the populations persisted. It led the emergence of fragmentary state having lack of common ethnic affinity.¹⁰ These contradictions turned into ethnic and communal clashes.¹¹ The initial success of welding diverse populations together lost appeal, because those efforts were essentially directed towards the achievement of statehood, and for statehood they were to assert their status as 'nations'.¹² The task to achieve nationhood required the successful integration of the diverse populations in the national mainstream simultaneously maintaining plurality and diversity. But the efforts at statehood and common nationhood could not transcend separate ethnic consciousness, which emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the post-independence period.¹³

Then there is the reality of colonial legacy still persisting in these newly emerged nation states of South Asia. The subjugation of

⁸ C. Hayes, *Nationalism : A Religion*, New York : 1962, p.181, as cited in Ralph R. Premdas, "Ethnic Conflict and Modes of Accommodation : Problems and Opportunities in Multi-Ethnic States", Inaugural Lecture (Mimeo), St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, W. I : Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of West Indies, 1997, p. 15.

⁹ Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalism : The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰ Louis L. Synder, *Varieties of Nationalism : A Comparative Study*, Hinsdale : The Dryden Press, 1976, p. 171.

¹¹ Donald L. Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹² Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in South Asia*, New Delhi : Sage, 1990, p. 22.

¹³ For details see, R. S. Chavan, *Nationalism in Asia*, New Delhi : Sterling, 1973, pp. 221-222.

diverse populations under one colonial rule, differential treatment to the diverse ethnic communities, "gradual erosion of the traditional normative framework",¹³ and irrational demarcation of boundaries have had far reaching implications in the post-colonial context. The colonisation by a distant alien ruler resulted in the marginalisation of certain 'crypto-nations' within specified territories. In those situations, where the colonialists did not physically liquidate the native populations (although they enslaved and exploited them), the impact was more cultural than physical. Anyway, the colonial pattern had an all-pervasive impact on the pattern of post-colonial cultural identity through the unequal development of the territories they possessed. There was uneven gradational access to modernisation and development. The focus of major urban centers, the modes of transport and communication, employment opportunities, educational exposure, the industrial layout developed by the colonial masters facilitated the ascension into higher social roles of relatively large number of some communities, while marginalising the others. In this way, colonial subjugation has affected the South Asian societies positively as well as negatively. The soft border policies and relatively autonomous or semi-autonomous status accorded to certain communities were a few positive things that happened at that time. On the other hand, the process of "identifying, counting, classifying and defining the boundaries of the groups"¹⁴ and super-imposing the same gave rise to the parochial attachments which are still lingering on in the newly emerged nation-states.¹⁵ The post-colonial state has been adopting tough postures against such impediments by coercive strategies and policies to achieve the objective of nationhood out of highly

¹³ Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

¹⁴ Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, New Delhi : Sage, 1991, pp. 242-243.

¹⁵ For details see, Tord Hoivik, "The Demography of Structural Violence", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1997, pp. 59-73.

ethnically fractured populations symbolising composite socio-cultural and politico-economic identity.

Moreover, the newly emerged South Asian nation-states inherited the boundaries 'uti-possidetis'.¹⁶ The boundaries set up by the colonialists "...were often artificial, established for and at the convenience of the imperial power, or fortuitously; and as mentioned, they split tribes or combined disparate tribes and peoples. But generally they delimited the territories that became those of the now nation-states".¹⁷ The most vital factors such as religion, ethnic affinities, language, culture etc. were not taken into consideration.¹⁸ The colonial masters encouraged forced co-habitation within a single state of antagonistic groups that were clubbed together artificially within specified territories as per their administrative convenience. The diverse societies of South Asia were basically "ethnic patchworks".¹⁹ Though the diversities were brought under single administrative control, not many attempts were made to homogenise or assimilate the diverse populations. Such a control on many occasions proved to be more ceremonial rather than real and effective. It was, perhaps, partly because of the absence of effective technological infrastructure for control and administration and partly due to the limited sphere of state activity that was

¹⁶ See, J. R. V. Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries*, London : Allen and Unwin, 1987, p. 105.

¹⁷ Boyd C. Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism : New Realities Old Myth*, New York : Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich Inc., 1972, p. 277. Also see, Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Predicament of the Third World State : Reflections on State Making in a Comparative Perspective", in Brain L. Job., ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma : National Security of Third World States*, London : Lynne Rienner, 1972, p. 70.

¹⁸ Soedyatmoko, "Violence in the Third World", in Raimo Varyrynen, ed., *The Quest for Peace*, London : Sage, 1987, p. 298.

¹⁹ Rajni Kothari, "Escaping the Trap of Cultural Diversity", *Himal : South Asia*, May- June, 1992, p. 15.

primarily confined to the defence, maintaining law and order, collection of revenue and administration of justice.²⁰

Because of such limited and ceremonial control, the internal cleavages present in the plural societies at that time were submerged but not resolved by the colonialists. The hopes and aspirations that remained dormant re-emerged in the post-independence period producing conflict and violence at an unprecedented scale. In quite a good number of cases, the "...ethnic consciousness was deliberately kept alive and encouraged by the colonial overseers as an element in the policy of divide and rule."²¹ These policies in a way induced sharp competition amongst the diverse ethnic communities. The encouragement for immigration abroad, protecting and fostering specific ethnic communities, the employment of certain groups for colonial administration as well as in the armed forces, at the cost of others, are cases in point. Amidst this colonial legacy still persisting and the diverse nature of inherited societies, the newly emerged nation states of South Asia had a crucial task to accomplish. In order to construct a viable state they had to prove their nationhood, the way Europeans did a long way back. The European models provided a base to their nationalism in the struggle for independence. It was hoped that such a model will put together diverse communities in a single political unit and the traditional loyalties would shift towards a single loyalty called 'nation'. But the task to create territorial nations within the existing state boundaries posed a stupendous if not impossible task.²² In the European context, nationalism was

²⁰ Gurnam Singh, "Ethno-National Upsurge and Problems of National Security in the Third World : Kaleidoscope on India", (Mimeo), Amritsar : Deptt. of Political Science, GNDU, Amritsar, 2000, p. 11.

²¹ Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?", *World Politics*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, 1972, p. 328.

²² For details see, Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, London : Gerald Duckworth, 1971, pp. 215-227.

accompanied and/or followed by industrial and democratic revolutions and common language and culture were the key components in the growth of nation states. The cultural foundations, history, traditions, language and literature were laid down first and then came the drive for a viable statehood. But the procedure adopted in South Asia took the reverse form. The basic ground realities in South Asia are entirely different from that of Europe. The entire concept of nation and nation state is historically different from the West. The latter did not experience the prolonged period of colonial subjugation and so the indigenous processes and institutions remained intact and later on helped them in the process of nation building. Contrary to it, the South Asian states “found mixed seeds of their nationalism planted in highly diverse societies”,²³ the task before them was virtually Herculean as they had to transform ‘primordial sentiments’, to create national identity and to build a viable and cohesive nation-state out of multiple sub-national groups.²⁴ The task formally rests with the dominant ruling elite representing the core of dominant community that had control over the state apparatus. They were well aware of the fact that the process of nation-building and state-building usually involves a lot of human sufferings and deprivation of large sections of the society.²⁵ This required ‘adequate stateness’ and ability to perform the task in a ‘humane, civilised and consensual fashion’, and that too in the present era of mass politics.²⁶ But the attitude of the dominant ruling elite was that of ‘catching up’²⁷ with already established nation-

²³ Raunaq Jahan, *Pakistan : Failure in National Integration*, New York : Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 1

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁵ Ashis Nandy, “Nation-State and Self-Hatred”, *Himal : South Asia*, July, 1996, p. 16.

²⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

²⁷ Arnold Rivkin, *Nation-Building in Africa : Problems and Prospects*, New Brunswick : Rutgers University Press, 1969, p. 9. Also see, Mir A. Ferdowsi, “Regional Conflicts in the Third World : Dimensions, Causes, Perspectives”, *Law and State*, Vols. 37-38, 1988, p. 41.

states, ironically taking the course in the reverse form. The twin projects of nation building and state building have been perceived "as a process of eroding traditional and primordial loyalties in favour of a new political and cultural identity of the people as a nation".²⁸ The impediments in the way of such initiatives were manifold. As far as the European nation states are concerned, before they proceeded on to the project of nation building they had already achieved a large measure of internal unity and were not plagued by the minority problems arising from the presence of distinct ethno-national identities. These states were historically formed on the basis of what can be described as culturally fairly coherent ethno-national entities called 'nations'.²⁹ And even besides that, the growing homogeneity in the West is sharply in contrast to the cultural differentiation in South Asia, wherein the state has come about by a quirk of history and the establishment of nationhood is running parallel. The internal situation in these states is marked by conditional legitimacy for the state boundaries, state infrastructure, governments, and lack of social cohesion and perceptual differences between the elite and masse's version of socio-cultural and politico-economic issues. These impediments at the very nascent stage have been crucial to the nation building and state formation. Though, the European nation-states of late have also been facing such challenges, the state structure is well organised to handle such challenges. Moreover, ethnic conflicts in the West are far less urgent and violent

²⁸ D.L. Sheth, "Nation-Building in Multi-Ethnic Societies: The Experience of South Asia", in Ramakant and B.C. Upreti, eds., *Nation-Building in South Asia*, Vol.1, New Delhi : South Asian Publishers, 1991, pp. 17-18. Also see, Alfred Cobben, "The Rise of the Nation-State System", in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1994 and Muhammad Shahiduzzaman, "The State and Nation Approach in Resolving Problems of Ethnicity", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1995, p. 291.

²⁹ See, Gopala Sharma and U.S. Mishra, "Ethnicity, Nationhood and Integration", in A. D. Pant and Shiva K. Gupta, eds., *Multi-Ethnicity and National Integration : A Politico-Antropological View*, Allahabad : Vohra Publishers, 1985, p. 80.

because of flexible, accommodative and tolerant state structure.³⁰ Nevertheless, this does not make ethnicity a lesser problem in the West. Besides, the major limitation on these states was that the process of nation building and state building requires lots of time and a relatively free hand to pursue, cajole and coerce the disparate populations under their nominal rule to accept the legitimacy of state boundaries and institutions, to accept the right of the state to extract resources from them, and to let the state regulate the more important aspects of their lives³¹ and such requirements were either totally absent or present partially.

In the case of Europe, the availability of time, salience of democratic ideals and absence of international normative regime had facilitated the process of nation building and state building to a large extent. But in South Asia, the lack of availability of time for accomplishing such a daunting task has created diverse problems because the states and its dominant ruling elite are in a hurry to drive the diverse and differentiated masses towards a solid and cohesive national identity. The states cannot afford to prolong the processes in the presence of ethnic pulls and pressures and the involved cost -- human as well as material. But the European historical experience of centuries cannot be encapsulated into a few decades in case of South Asia. In order to reach the goal under all the constraints, the states have justified the authoritarian and assimilative means to build strong, integrative and cohesive nation states,³² within the shortest possible time frame. Secondly, and even more importantly, the

³⁰ Mohammed Ayoob, "State-Making, State-Breaking and State-Failure : Explaining the Roots of 'Third World' Insecurity", in Luc Van De Goor, et. al., eds., *Between Development and Destruction : An Inquiry into the Cases of Conflict in Post-Colonial States*, London : Macmillan, 1996, pp. 71-72.

³¹ Mohammed Ayoob, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

³² Arnold Rivkin, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

democratic ideals and international normative regime were either absent or present in a weak form during the crucial stages of nation building and state building in Europe. It is only after the French Revolution and the American War of Independence that the democratic ideals such as equality, liberty, equal participation and egalitarian distribution of the resources emerged in the realm of international politics. The mass awareness and resultant pattern in socio-cultural and politico-economic spheres have created more difficulties for the newly emerged nation-states that are yet to create a viable and efficient state structure to meet the hopes and aspirations of the diverse masses.

The ideals of the European nation state as adopted by them have proved to be insufficient and counter-productive. The legitimacy of such models has been called to question by the diverse ethno-national communities.³³ The ideal of territorial nation states encompassing widely diverse population is on the discount because it has not facilitated the coinciding of emotive dimensions of political order with that of administrative dimensions of political order.³⁴ The force of ethno-nationalism that "refer to sub-state groups located in heterogeneous multi-ethnic states separated by self-conscious and self-ascribed cultural and other characteristics, which are politically mobilised to address collective grievances against the state",³⁵ has become order of the day.

To conclude, the historical legacies such as the absence of deep rooted nationalism, irrational demarcation of boundaries during the

³³ Rajni Kothari, "Ethnicity", *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay : 6 March, 1988, p. 42.

³⁴ Mohammed Ayoob, "Security of South Asia : Searching for the Key Variables", Keynote Address Delivered at the RCSS Summer Workshop, *RCSS Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 4, October, 1997. p. 6.

³⁵ Ralph R. Premdas, "Secession and Decentralization: The Bougainville Case", *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol. XXV, 1998, p. 23.

transfer of power and the desire to catch up with already established nation states have complicated the whole process of national integration and political stability.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION PROCESSES IN SOUTH ASIA

In order to accomplish such a daunting task of nation building, the dominant ruling elite in South Asia were required to refurbish their outlook and strategies to show their capacity to administer the highly diverse populations properly. The social realities of these nation-states were highly diverse and therefore, they had to take extra care of their ethnically, religiously, linguistically and historically diverse populations. With multiple distinct identities, "the exhibition of sub-national loyalties"³⁶ and resurgence of hopes and aspirations was a natural consequence. In these circumstances, the process of nation building required to be "...an extended activity and perennial process oriented towards development-centric goals, which should ultimately move in the direction of building interpenetrating linkages between all segments of the society so that a large national identity based upon their inter-dependence could be reflected".³⁷ The most immediate task thus was broadening the mental horizon of the people (secular and universal education, social mobilisation, urbanisation and industrialisation), encouraging the development of a composite, plural and harmonious culture including recognition of various languages by the state, more interaction amongst various communities, providing assistance for development of individual talent high education, training facilities,

³⁶ Olive Peacock, "Minorities' Attitude Towards Politics", in Ramakant and B.C. Upreti, eds., *Nation- Building in South Asia*, Vol. II, New Delhi : South Asian Publishers, 1991, p. 353.

³⁷ P.L. Bhola, "Nation-Building in Pakistan : The Role of Foreign Policy", in Ramakant and B.C. Upreti, eds., *op.cit.*, p. 224.

jobs etc. and associating people in the administration of the country at various levels.³⁸

But as per the ground realities, these nation states with diverse populations were required to achieve a level of integration that was an uphill task. The diverse populations during the freedom struggle became aware of the democratic ideals but at the same time, they also became conscious of their distinct ethnic identities. Moreover, these newly emerged nation states were not historically fixed or universally accepted entities; rather the national identity was continuously contested by the conflicting elements within the state. The states took up the task of nation building in the midst of such impediments and internal cleavages. It was hoped that with the passage of time, passion of ethnic or parochial identities would subside, if not disappear, in the process of nation building. The diverse communities would subsequently be re-integrated into a nationalist structure. Even the modernisation theorists supported the argument that with the development and modernisation strides, ethnic agenda would lose appeal. The wholesome nationalistic framework would weld together the people of distinct identities notwithstanding the fact that such ethno-national identities were highly passionate and powerful. Therefore, these nation-states are composed of 'imagined communities', imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign in itself.³⁹ Ironically, such is the degree of diversity that the inhabitants of one geographical area do not know about the fellow countryman living in adjacent area but still the image of commonhood is projected. These imagined communities

³⁸ R.S. Chauhan, "Nation-Building in Nepal", in Ramakant and B.C. Upreti, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 366.

³⁹ See, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 6.

have conceived certain notions of rights which are not an end in themselves but a means towards the end of forging a viable and secure collectively called nation state, decidedly but erroneously image of majority community.⁴⁰ Simultaneously, the separate ethnic identity assertions were perceived as irrational, primordial, 'archaic', 'premodern form of social action.'⁴¹ But such an attitude proved counter-productive in the sense that it made ethnic identity assertions much more "powerful, permeative, passionate and pervasive",⁴² thus exacerbating the problems that it sought to eradicate.

In the task of nation building and state formation, the challenge which the South Asian nation states are facing was the integration of minority communities. The minority communities were partly the outcome of the colonial policies in the form of irrational demarcation of boundaries and partly the patterns of migration resulting in criss-cross of ethnically homogeneous populations. The propagation of a single whole identity revolving around dominant communities' idioms, symbols, values and institutions led to the bleak status of the minorities as well as their future within the modern state system.⁴³ The system of nation state as adopted advocated sovereignty in the first place and the outright loyalty of the diverse masses to the nation state thereafter. The latter was considered as the precondition for nation building and vital for

⁴⁰ Paikiasothy Sarvanamuttu, "Safeguarding Minority Communities in South Asia", in L.L. Mehrotra, H.C. Chopra and Gert W. Kueck, eds., *SAARC 2000 and Beyond*, New Delhi : Omega Scientific Publishers, 1995, p. 257.

⁴¹ Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya, "Ethno-National Movements : A Framework of Analysis", in Ramakant and B.C.Upreti, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁴² Donald L. Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁴³ Ray Taras, "Nations and Language-Building : Old Theories, Contemporary Cases", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Autumn, 1998, p. 81.

territorial integrity. In these highly diverse societies, the model of national integration which was required was to integrate the diverse populations politically and not culturally. The former stands for liberal and egalitarian policy towards integration while not undermining the group rights, privileges and separate identities, whereas the latter attempts at assimilating the diverse populations culturally as per the dominant communities' idioms, symbols, values history and institutions. The post-colonial nation states clinged wholly to the ideal of political as well as cultural unification of its diverse masses. But such a model of integration did not work well in South Asia with regard to the actual ground realities. The attempt to eliminate or at least suppress the distinct ethnic identities, through cultural and political unification, was not a viable approach in the given context. Rather, it produced serious ramifications. Apart from political and cultural considerations, the competition for scarce resources and opportunities also aggravated the problems for the minority communities. The immediate requirement in the given context was national integration which implies that diverse populations should be brought together, either through consociationalism or multi-culturalism.⁴⁴ The efforts required were to identify commonalties with respect to common goals along with maintaining and promoting the distinct ethnic identity of each group within the nation state and existing international political boundaries.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ray Taras, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Also see, James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, London : Macmillan, 1991, pp.77-78.

⁴⁵ Krishna B. Bhattachan, Kailash N. Pyakuyal, "The Issue of National Integration in Nepal : An Ethnoregional Approach", *Occasional Papers*, Kathmandu : Deptt. of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribunv University, 1996, p. 17. Also see, J. Milton Yinger, *Ethnicity : Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?*, Jaipur : Rawat Publications, 1997, pp. 82-98.

Apart from this, for the purpose of nation building after the transfer of power, the indigenous rulers had to adopt certain strategies and models to address to the challenge of national identity construction. The perplexing project included 'nation making' strengthening 'national sovereignty', creating 'national culture', 'national identity' and achieving 'national integration.'⁴⁶ Some of them partially achieved the goal of statehood either during the process of decolonisation or subsequently, but the formation of the state into nation proved to be a multi-dimensional process which included socio-cultural cohesiveness, a politico-economic system emerging out of a consensus in the society, and a strong emotional bond which the masses feel towards the state.⁴⁷

However, the question of national identity as the most fundamental ideal, involved self-definition, the feeling of collectivity and commonhood which could result from a variety of attributes such as language, religion, tradition, history and so on. Elite of the minority communities to articulate self-identity in the contemporary times used the historical myths, traditions, rituals and symbols of common nationhood. Rather than being externally fostered, the attributes of ethno-national identities are formed out of wide range of influences and experiences, which create degree of attachment to a particular group, and all this is internally generated in 'us' and 'them' syndrome.⁴⁸ Thus, the anti-colonial consciousness, which produced a workable united front, was more externally

⁴⁶ Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Nation-State in Crisis and the Rise of Ethnonationalism", *Pravada*, (Sri Lanka), Vol. 1, No. 9. September, 1992, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁷ Ramakant and B.C. Upreti, "Introduction", in Ramakant and B. C. Upreti, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Walker Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 341 and Walker Connor "Ethnology and the Peace of South Asia", *World Politics*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, October, 1969, p. 55. Also see, Anthony D. Smith, "The Nations : Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed", *Millennium*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1991, pp. 353-368.

fostered rather than internally generated. Because of that, the post-colonial nation states came to have the 'form' but lacked the 'substance' of a nationhood.⁴⁹

Historically speaking, while the ideology of nationalism justified the creation of modern nation states, power politics greatly impinged upon the demarcation of boundaries and also prevented the desired political order in these nation states. At one point of time, the application of a single national ideology to the multi-national character of societies temporarily convinced the masses. But the individualistic pursuits for power did not facilitate the establishment of legitimate political order.⁵⁰ Such a pursuit for power politics has led to the overarching domination of the specific ethnic group. An ethnic group in the given context is defined as "a social group or category of the population that, in a larger society, is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality or culture."⁵¹

Even in the case of Europe, whose pattern of nation building has been adopted by the post-colonial nation states, the ethnic challenges have come up in recent times but in this case the historical process has been quite the opposite. In Europe, by and large, territorial national unification movements preceded the formation of the state and the resultant states embraced people who in the course of such long drawn movements had developed a sense of common identity that brought them together as nations. Whereas in Europe, nations were constituted into states, in the post-colonial nation states of

⁴⁹ Lucien W. Pye, *Politics, Personality and Nation-Building*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 1969, p.3.

⁵⁰ Aftab A. Kazi, "Ethnic Nationalism and Super Powers in South Asia : Sindhis and Baluchis", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XII, No.1, April, 1998, p. 31.

⁵¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 4, 1997, p. 528.

South Asia the order is just the reverse. The problem would have not been that acute, had the goal of national liberation been achieved through long drawn struggle for independence. Such a process (which was absent in almost all the cases) would have facilitated an understanding even amongst the masses at the lower level. At such a nascent stage of nation building and state building where unstable political order exists, the accumulation of power becomes so crucial to the state making enterprise, and the more primitive the stage of state building the more primitive and coercive the strategies employed to accumulate and concentrate power in the hands of the agents of the state.⁵² This is true in the case of post-colonial states of South Asia wherein the state apparatus is overwhelmingly dominated by the dominant ethnic entrepreneurs.

Consequently, the nation building and state building revolves around the idioms, symbols, values and institutions of the dominant community. The latter have continuously and steadfastly professed the 'imagined' nation states as unified and homogeneous, as per the 'official nationalistic' perspective.⁵³ Such a perspective imposes a particular identity from above and does not allow it to grow spontaneously from below.⁵⁴ This forced national identity has been targeted at those minority communities which are either reluctant to join the national mainstream as composed of and captive of the dominant community, and/or they do not share anything with the dominant ruling elite culture. The emphasis on the part of the latter is to maintain unity and integrity at any cost irrespective of diverse hopes and aspirations of the minorities. It has essentially viewed the process of nation building and state formation as to "absorb,

⁵² Mohammed Ayoob, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁵³ Benedict Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-27.

⁵⁴ Hamza Alavi, "Nationhood and Nationalities in Pakistan", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIV, No. 26, 8 July, 1989, p.1527.

assimilate and co-opt"⁵⁵ the diversities within the projected national mainstream. In order to create single national identity, national sentiments were required to be aroused and 'certain symbols', 'mythology' and 'sense of sacredness and belonging' were to be evolved⁵⁶ and standardised. Attempts have been made to produce "instant national symbols -- national airlines, national armed forces, national television network, national universities...",⁵⁷ national dress code, national awards, national histories, nation rituals and customs, national language and national education so on and so forth. With this the states have tried to construct ideals of 'natural nations' with the help of "historical symbols so as to portray mythical terms of historical continuity, claiming descent from premodern communities depicted in ethnic terms."⁵⁸ These symbols became the source of gaining legitimacy and support for hypothetical majoritarian constructions through the process of homogenisation and assimilation reflecting the cultural arrogance of the dominant community. Thus, the task of nation building and state building in the ethnically plural societies has been perceived as one of "reordering political equations among the ethnic groups."⁵⁹ The state rather than addressing itself to the creation of civil society in which several social and cultural categories could participate, became largely a mediator of ethnic political equations. Through the process of homogenisation and assimilation in the name of national

⁵⁵ Shiva K. Gupta, "Multi-Ethnicity and the Problem of National Integration", in A.D. Pant and Shiva K. Gupta, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ John Rex, "The Secret Project of Ethnicity : Transnational Migrant Communities and Ethnic Minorities in Modern Multi-Cultural Societies", *Innovations*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1994, p. 210, as cited in David Brown, "Why is the Nation-State so Vulnerable to Ethnic Nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1998, p. 6. Also see, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, London : Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 17.

⁵⁷ Arnold Rivkin, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵⁸ David Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Gurnam Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

integration and/or nation building, the idioms, symbols, values and institutions of the dominant community became the 'universal principles' for the whole of nation. The ideal of a unified nation state was taken as a powerful tool to subdue if not dissolve the diversities in the society. However, the post-colonial states of South Asia largely lacked the cohesive traditional attributes of nationhood, but the invention of these 'universal principles' did try to construct a unified national identity. In the process 'National states promote 'nativism' and construe its subjects as 'natives'. They land and enforced the ethnic, religious, linguistic, *cultural homogeneity*. They are engaged in incessant propaganda of *shared* attitudes. They construct joint historical memories and do their best to discredit or suppress such stubborn memories as can not be squeezed into shared tradition now redefined in the legal terms, as 'our own heritage'. They preach the sense of *common* mission, *common* fate, *common* destiny. They breed, or at least legitimise and give tacit support to animosity towards everyone standing outside the holy union.⁶⁰

For the enforcement of single whole identity, as conceived by the dominant ruling elite, they have relied on coercive policies to mobilize and manipulate the diverse populations. The mobilisation of the populations based on common attributes ought to be logically driven from the socio-cultural and historical heritage of the society. And to foster the process of national integration, there should be the equitable portrayal and representation of diverse ethnic communities in the national mainstream. But the continuous and steadfast sidelining of the diversities, by reinforcing the dominant

⁶⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Ithaca, New York : Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 7-8, as cited in Tarja Vayrynen, "Socially Constructed Ethnic Identities: A Need for Identity Management", in Hakan Wiberg and Christain P. Scherrer, eds., *Ethnicity and Inter-State Conflict*, Aldershot : Ashgote, 1999, p.136.

communities' version of the nation state encouraged homogenisation and assimilation instead of integration. Moreover, the contemporary state in South Asia is reluctant to recognise diversities and its efforts at forcibly creating homogeneous nation state "... has assumed unprecedented conflict proportions both extensive as well as intensive...."⁶¹

However, the policies and programmes of the state, which were supposed to act as 'protector and provider', became hegemonic in nature. The hegemonic forces and their policies have led to the incorporation of the diverse masses and by ignoring the irrelevance of the rational, the state and its dominant ruling elite invariably disapproved and ruthlessly suppressed any actual or potential threat from the diverse populations. In the process of homogenisation and assimilation those ethnic communities which willingly embraced the dominant communities' culture, language and way of life were considered as part of the national mainstream. On the other hand, those ethnic communities that do not accept the hegemony of the dominant community, according to the principle of 'inclusion and exclusion', are labeled as a threat to the state and its identity. Therefore, in this process those who could not be included got excluded.⁶² The hopes and aspirations of the excluded populations are labelled as parochial, chauvinistic and anti-national. Bombwall rightly says: "There has been a persistent tendency to view the nation state independently of the historical and socio-economic pre-conditions of its genesis and to treat it not only as the highest but also as the ultimate structure in which large human aggregates, most of them diverse and heterogeneous in

⁶¹ Gurnam Singh, "Modernisation, Ethnic Upsurge and Conflict in the World", *International Journal of Group Tensions*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Winter, 1994, p.406. Also see, Immanuel Geiss, " Post-Colonial Conflicts in the Third World", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 44, No. 1, January, 1991, p. 47.

⁶² Gurnam Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

their ethnic configurations, live and to which they do or must render willing and terminal, if not undivided, allegiance. The viability and near eternity of the nation states have come to be accepted almost as givens of the human situation.”⁶³

In these post-colonial societies, the nation states have become the property of the privileged ethnic communities, which are often majority having narrow, traditional and hostile attitude towards the other ethnic communities whose talent remains unexplored⁶⁴ because the former control the state apparatus and tend to favor their own members and discriminate against the rest.⁶⁵ Anthony D. Smith rightly argues that politics are often formed on the basis of “a few ethnic populations, especially the dominant one in the society”.⁶⁶ Automatically, the nation building project is organised and measured as per the ‘will of the majority’, defined by ‘dominant social forces’.⁶⁷ The dominant social forces often demand of the minorities an abject surrender of their distinctiveness to dominant culture and political power of the majority. Peeled of its subjective verbiage, majoritarianism is a cry for a political uniformity that hardly conceals its fascist fangs.⁶⁸

In these majority-minority confrontations, the worst scenario that has come up is that the existence of subordinate ethnic communities within the nation states is seen with hostility. To facilitate the domination of the majority dominant community, the models of political development have emphasised the role of the

⁶³ K.R. Bombwall, “The Nation-State and Ethno-Nationalism : A Note on the Akali Demand for a Self Determined Political Status for Sikhs”, *Punjab Journal of Politics*, Vol. VII, No. 2, July-December, 1983, p. 166.

⁶⁴ R.S. Chauhan, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

⁶⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁶⁷ Imtiaz Ahmed, “A Post-Nationalist South Asia”, *Himal : South Asia*, July, 1996, p.11.

⁶⁸ Bhabhani Sen Gupta, “Doctor’s Dilemma”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXIV, No.4, 26 January, 1991, p. 149.

state building via establishing, extending and strengthening the institutions of centralised state - as a precondition for development, change, national integration, modernisation and economic development. Through the centralised system, the states tends to penetrate deep into the peripheral areas and into the culturally and economically diverse regions.⁶⁹ As the state system becomes highly ethno-centric, the state apparatus is essentially controlled by specific ethnic communities, capable of pursuing homogenising processes and hegemonic approaches in order to exercise complete hegemony - political as well as cultural -- upon the diverse populations. Moreover, in such ethno-centric framework, the state demands complete loyalty to the national identity over and above the distinct ethnic identities of the subordinate ethnic communities. Such loyalties are considered to be *sine quo non* for successful national integration. Therefore, "nation-building and nation-killing become complementary aspects of the same policy of fostering the ethnic, religious, linguistic, political, and economic interests of those who control the state at the expense of others. If the state is to become one nation, there is obviously no room for other nations."⁷⁰ Hence, the project of nation building degenerates into one of nation destroying.⁷¹

Indeed in these post-colonial, multi-national nation-states the problem is not the diversity but reluctance on the part of ethno-centric and hegemonic forces to let the distinct people maintain

⁶⁹ Paul Brass, *The Politics of India Since Dependence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 31, as cited in Subrata K. Mitra, "Sub-National Movements in South Asia : Identity, Collective Action and Political Process", in Subrata K. Mitra, ed., *Sub-National Movements in South Asia*, Oxford : Westview Press, 1996, p. 46.

⁷⁰ Pierre Van de Bergh, "The Modern State : Nation-Builder or Nation-Killer?", *International Journal of Group Tensions*, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 196, as cited in Ralph R. Premdas, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁷¹ Walker Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

diversity. The dominant social forces and/or hegemonic forces have induced the sense of 'identity deprivation' by pursuing homogenisation processes and assimilationist policies by primitive methods and callous neglect of distinct ethnic identities. The subordinate ethnic communities that are the target of such policies and programmes are reduced to the status of second class citizens. The deprivation and discrimination has not only been done in social, cultural and political sphere but also in economic field. Similarly "Education or more precisely national education is vitally important. In all the South Asian nation states, education is delivered in a way which, while reproducing the model of development suited to the hegemonic forces, tends to make the school goers and, later on, the learned few nationalists,...this is an implied bias towards the majority community...." ⁷²

The more the degree of domination by one particular ethnic group or community, the more is the proportionate crystallisation of the ethnic sentiments in a multi-ethnic society. The internal bickering resulting out of conflicts in these segmented societies have undermined the state's unity, integrity and stability which further thwarted the process of nation-building and state-building,⁷³ and caused large scale sense of alienation and separation. The subordinate minority communities which are left out of the "national mainstream" -- virtually or deliberately -- face the option of assimilation, homogenisation, emigration, disagreeable minority status and physical liquidation.⁷⁴ The situation has encouraged "the dominant-subordinate groups' tussles for power sharing and for societal rewards".⁷⁵ Consequently social equilibrium is disturbed and

⁷² Imtiaz Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁷³ Subhransushekar Misra, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁷⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford : Basil and Balackwell, 1983, p. 98.

⁷⁵ Urmila Phadnis, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

ethnic divisions are sharpened. The dominant community's identity is often equated with national identity by the deprived ethnic communities.⁷⁶ Such hegemonic designs are itself the source of alienation, deprivation, discrimination, suppression and 'internal colonialism',⁷⁷ that the subordinate ethnic communities reject and resent.⁷⁸

In a nutshell, the task before the post-colonial states was not only to build states but viable nation states as well. The immature bonds of nationhood and statehood fostered during the freedom struggle lacked durability and / or sustainability. The task of nation building and state formation was the most difficult and technical in the face of the inherited diversities. But in spite of such diversities, the state tends to promote 'official nationalism' which revolves around dominant communities' idioms, symbols, values, history and institutions. However, in these multinational nation states the enforcement of 'single national identity' is neither viable nor required. The nation states can possibly contain and accommodate diverse populations in the political framework on the basis of plural and/or divided loyalties. Historically speaking, the case of plural loyalties is not a rare occurrence, as the case of tribals in the British India reflects. The tribals had direct formal relations with the British crown based on a number of treaties. Thus, they in a way professed loyalty to the colonial masters in return for non-interference in their tribal affairs. On the other side, the tribals maintained their loyalty towards the chieftains who regulated their day-to-day affairs. But lack of such farsightedness on the part of the states in the post-

⁷⁶ For details see, Olive Peacock, *op.cit.*, pp. 353-362.

⁷⁷ See, Raunaq Jahan, *op. cit.*, p. 1. Also see, Rodolfo Stavenhagan, *Ethnic Conflict and the Nation-State*, London : Macmillan, 1996, p. 21.

⁷⁸ For details see, Imtiaz Ahmed, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

colonial era has spurred the upsurge of ethno-nationalism, the latter demanding social, cultural, political, economic, ethnic and geographical reordering. The socio-cultural and politico-economic conflicts as the result of proposed single national identity of the nation state in contrast to the multi-national character of the society hinder not only the process of nation building and state formation but also international security.

CONSEQUENCES OF INTEGRATION PROJECT: MAJORITY AND MINORITY PERCEPTUAL DIVERGENCES

The approaches and strategies as adopted by the South Asian nation-states reflect that hegemonies have been formed in almost all the cases in the name of 'Sunni Muslim Pakistan', 'Hindu India', 'Sinhala-Buddhist Sri Lanka', 'Drupkas Buddhist Bhutan', 'Hindu Nepal' and 'Bengali Muslim Bangladesh'. The majority communities are simultaneously organized along the territorial nation-states "albeit in each case in the manner defined by the dominant social forces".⁷⁹ The freezing of socio-cultural and politico-economic boundaries with its inclusionary and exclusionary features have permitted the victimisation and manipulation of many.⁸⁰ With such an attitude of the state the project of nation building and state building has been working at cross-purposes. The claim to nationhood, which historically speaking ought to possess "...a single people, traditionally fixed on a well defined territory, speaking the same language and preferably a language all its own, possessing a distinctive culture and shaped to a common mould by many generations of shared historical experiences"⁸¹ is a utopia.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁸⁰ Ralph R. Premdas, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁸¹ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960, p.102.

The problem is that not only are these societies heterogeneous, diversified and plural but the socio-cultural and politico-economic policies having ethnic biases and preferences that enhance "sectional and systematic disparities."⁸² Consequently, they face multi-dimensional challenges in the form of 'penetration crisis', 'participation crisis', 'legitimacy crisis', 'distribution crisis' and 'national identity crisis'.⁸³ In the process of nation building, the diverse ethnic communities which are often subordinated, find themselves permanently excluded and deprived from power and resources due to the overwhelming dominance of the dominant community. Even the process of democratisation, which has facilitated harmonious relationships between the state and the subjects in the West, is proving counter productive in these cases. The process of democracy without decentralisation creates permanently deprived minority communities.⁸⁴ In due course, these minority communities get politicised by the nation building imperatives. This sharpens ethnic consciousness on an unprecedented scale,⁸⁵ thus, giving sustenance to the sub-national entities of primordial society and unlikelihood on their part to be merged wholly into the 'unfamiliar, civil state, born yesterday from the meagre remains of an exhausted colonial regime' that has been superimposed on them.⁸⁶

The post-colonial nation states built in the majoritarian mould have been plagued with instability and disunity largely as the result

⁸² Ralph R. Premdas, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁸³ Mir A. Ferdowsi, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

⁸⁴ Rajni Kothari, "The State in Transition", in Pradip Sarbadhikari, *Reconstituting India*, Calcutta : Oxford, 1995, pp. 26-36.

⁸⁵ Anirudha Gupta, "Ethnic Conflict : Roots of the Problems", *Mainstream*, 25 May, 1991, p. 10.

⁸⁶ Rupert Emerson, "Post-Independence Nationalism in South and South East Asia : A Reconsideration", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 44, No. 2, Summer, 1972, p.192.

of "sense of political suffocation"⁸⁷ being experienced by the subordinate communities at the hands of the dominant communities' ruling elite. Along with this, the gradual erosion of traditional autonomy base with the advent of all-powerful state, which has no substantial support base, and the perception and projection of the dominant ruling elite to be discriminative, oppressive, assimilationist, homogenising, interventionist, and penetrative, has facilitated the upsurge of ethno-nationalism,⁸⁸ and confrontation between the principle of territorial identity and national identity.⁸⁹ Such confrontations and mass upsurges in the name of distinct ethno-national identity have been viewed as "transitional phase",⁹⁰ in the hope that the loyalty to the state would ultimately become supreme and all other diverse identities would be submerged and subsided. Contrary to this, the diverse masses have become more and more aware of their distinct identities perceiving these as an inalienable right either by themselves or as mobilised by the ethnic elite of that particular group. The persistency and consistency of ethnic self-assertion has increased manifold. As such ethnic consciousness is definitely in the ascendancy as political force and that state borders, as presently delimited are being increasingly challenged by this trend.⁹¹ And what is of greater significance, multi-ethnic states at all levels of modernity have been afflicted with so many problems. Particularly instructive in this regard is the large proportion of states within the

⁸⁷ Clifford Geertz, "Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States : The Integrative Revolution", in John T. Mcalister. Jr, ed., *South East Asia : The Politics of National Integration*, Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1973, p. 48.

⁸⁸ Mohammed Ayoob, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁸⁹ For details see, Shelton U. Kodikara, "Ethnonationalism in South Asia : A Comparative Regional Perspective", in Lok Raj Baral and S. D. Muni, eds., *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia*, New Delhi : Konark, 1996.

⁹⁰ Anjoo Sharan Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁹¹ For details see, Walker Connor, "Self-Determination : The New Phase", *World Politics*, Vol. XX. October, 1967, pp. 30-53.

technologically and economically advanced regions of Western Europe that have recently been troubled by ethnic conflict.⁹²

In these circumstances, 'deliberate economic exploitation'⁹³ or the cultural- political arrogance of the dominant community has induced, alleged internal colonialism,⁹⁴ a sense of relative deprivation and discrimination⁹⁵ in the subordinate ethnic communities and this in turn has promoted feelings of alienation amongst them. The ultimate outcome of such policies is the release of conflicting forces which undermine national cohesion and create disruptive tensions.⁹⁶ The subjugated groups start raising the demands for equal participation in the national mainstream through balanced socio-cultural and politico-economic policies. However, when multiethnic personality of such a state-centric nation does not find expression in its power structure as well as politics and gets in effect reduced to the virtual dominance of the major ethnic community, then the very *raison d'etre* of the nation is jeopardized and leads to the assertion of some of the ethnic communities as 'nations'.⁹⁷

⁹² Walker Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 327. Also see, Rupesinghe and Khawar Mumtaz, eds., *Internal Conflict in South Asia*, New Delhi : Sage, 1996, Karl W. Deutsch, *Tides Among Nations*, London : Macmillan, 1979, p. 137 and Anthony H. Richmond, *Immigration and Ethnic Conflict*, London : Macmillan, 1988, pp. 155-156.

⁹³ Karl W. Deutsch, "The Growth of Nations : Some Recurrent Patterns of Political and Social Integration", in John T. Mcalister Jr., eds., *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹⁴ Raunaq Jahan, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ S.D. Muni, "Dimensions of Domestic Conflicts in South Asia", in Urmila Phadnis, S.D. Muni and, Kalim Bahadur, eds., *Domestic Conflicts in South Asia*, New Delhi : South Asia Publishers, 1986, p. 69.

⁹⁶ Asghar Ali Emgineer, "Process of Nation-Building in South Asia : Some Ethnic and Communal Aspects", in Ramakant and B.C. Upreti, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 25. Also see, Asghar Ali Engineer, "Ethno-Communal Aspects of South Asian Nation-Building", *Mainstream*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 27, 11 March, 1989, p. 23.

⁹⁷ Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, pp. 246.

The crypto-national groups and/or communities “resent, reject, rebut, resist and rebel”⁹⁸ the efforts of the dominant ruling elite to homogenise and assimilate them into a single whole identity of the claimed nationhood. Consequently, the subordinate minorities mobilise their ethnic groups “... nostalgically reviving or reinventing the memories of the lost territory or independence or a state of predominance with suitable period of history as referents”.⁹⁹ These bonds of shared past -- real or imaginary -- when emerge ultimately divide the masses into ‘us’ and ‘them’ syndrome.¹⁰⁰ In South Asia, this syndrome has created ‘*faultlines*’ and ‘*mental borders*’ that separate one distinct ethnic community from the other. Karl Deutsch aptly sums up the resurgence of ethnic consciousness and its aftermath as follows: Once the process of group consciousness has started, however, there appears also the deliberate pioneers and leaders of national awakening. There appear grammarians who reduce the popular speech to writing ; purifiers of language ; collectors of folk epics, tales, and songs ; the first poet and writer in the revised vernacular ; and the antiquarians and historians who discover ancient documents and literary treasures - some genuine, some forged, but all of them tokens of national greatness.¹⁰¹

As far as the demands of these deprived ethnic communities are concerned, they vary from place to place and situation to situation. The basis of the demands is either primordial, or instrumental, cultural pluralist, interest aggregation and or discrimination and deprivation.¹⁰² The diverse communities are using social protests,

⁹⁸ Gurnam Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Gurnam Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 412. Also see, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1981.

¹⁰⁰ Walker Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

¹⁰¹ Karl W. Deutsch, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁰² For Details see Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-20.

constitutional fights, violent struggles or insurgencies as means in their demands for safeguards and reservation for the deprived sections, autonomy, the demands for removal of socio-cultural and political-economic submergence of diverse areas, establishment of federal framework for the subordinate minority communities and outright secession. Such is the situation that even the smallest of subordinate ethnic communities have adopted aggressive and hostile attitude towards the state. Relatively, the level of ethnic consciousness has also increased.¹⁰³ Therefore, these communities seek to ensure that they are provided with socio-cultural and politico-economic rights by the state in which they have been incorporated by an accident of history. And in situations where state does not come up to the hopes and aspirations of the diverse communities, the latter threaten to break away and form their own state(s).¹⁰⁴

The centralised states in South Asia have resisted the upsurge of ethno-national identity assertions in order to maintain the unity and integrity of their 'imagined communities'. The states have mostly employed two broad policies, firstly, the propagation of official nationalism on the basis of one or combination of diverse attributes identifying the minorities for the purpose of suppression, thereby seeking political legitimacy for the state controlled by a constructed cultural homogeneity. In this, they carried out policies that were similar to those employed by Russia in the process of Russification, and Britain through Anglicisation. Secondly, the states have reacted to the assertions of separate identity by excluded and deprived communities by treating them as threat to the state. Thus, the states have become more coercive, repressive, oppressive and aggressive

¹⁰³ J. Milton Yinger, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 15.

towards such upsurges. As the state apparatus is overwhelmingly “manned by the members of the majority community...”,¹⁰⁵ the national security, national unity and integrity become the major concern of the state, which is “predisposed towards the task of organising and reproducing the latter’s hegemony”.¹⁰⁶ The military might has been used for “restoring the *status quo ante* or providing sufficient leverage to necessitate minimal concessions”.¹⁰⁷ The South Asian nation states, however, have been reluctant to adopt recognition and accommodation as the method of conflict resolution in such multi-ethnic societies.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, even decades after independence, the process of nation building and state formation is nowhere near completion. Still there is conceptual trap, nation building has essentially been taken as state building wherein coercive state power is used to integrate the diverse populations. These states are besieged with multiple problems. The above discussion clearly manifests how difficult and problematic it is to achieve a unified political authority of the state and politico-cultural identity of a nation, revolving around the dominant community’s symbols, idioms, values, history and institutions. It also becomes evident that the states in South Asia have not taken due care of the danger of clinging wholly to the notion of nation state -- a notion essentially imbibed from the West. Whether unilingual, unicultural and homogeneous nation state was at all a desirable proposition for these multiethnic nation-states has been lamentably addressed. Perhaps, the dominant ruling elite have

¹⁰⁵ Imtiaz Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Paikiasothy Sarvanamuttu, *op. cit.*, p.259.

failed to recognise the fact that no post-colonial nation state is homogeneous, whatever homogeneity is perceived to be, it is only a 'mental construct'. Rather a multi-ethnic state constitutes a plurality of different races and communities with each having its identity rooted in separate customs, history, language, religion so on and so forth. But for these nation states the doctrine of political and cultural unity has remained the top priority. In a way, the reality has been distorted and deliberately confused with 'a single whole national identity'. Indeed, the situation in South Asia itself encouraged ethnic separatism by demanding complete loyalty to the state and its institutions, even if that oversteps distinct and separate identities. In almost all the cases, the diverse subordinate communities resist the policies and programmes of the state. The separate ethnic identity is reinforced and sharpened because of the prevailing socio-cultural and politico-economic injustice. No doubt during the colonial period, in the freedom struggle, because of the enthusiasm generated by the social movements and the charisma of the leadership, the diverse masses temporarily abandoned their diverse identities but the post-independence scenario is essentially marked by the acquired salience of such identities.

Furthermore, nation building and state building have proved to be a juggernaut under which the distinct ethno-national identities are being pilloried. The strategies adopted and processes have gone asymmetrical. The nation states are disintegrating. Homogenisation, assimilation and over centralisation have been atomising these nation-states. The ethnic upsurge is being managed in an imprudently casual manner. Rather than adopting political and accommodative measures, force has been used to suppress the ethnic disorder. However, the immediate cause of concern for these nation-states should be to integrate the diverse populations politically rather

than culturally. The fractured populations should be gradually made the part of national mainstream. The diversities should be recognised as well as protected in the framework of shared values. The plans, policies and programmes should be designed in such a manner that the development of one community may not lead to cultural immiseration of the other.