The Myth of Nation Building and Security of Bangladesh: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts

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'Politics of ethnicity is threatening to tear apart the fabric of nation-state system, this is a common contention among political scientists to-day. As such there has been no paucity of intellectual exercise on their part to explain the entire phenomenon. Association of the ethnic syndrome with the decolonised world, at an earlier stage, had remarkably simplified the task for them. It was considered to be yet another stigma peculiar to the third world, the component units of which were labelled as 'state-nations'. These 'state-nations' would of course in due time join the rank of 'nation states', once they come out successfully through the arduous path of 'nation-building'. This chore of building a nation was to be performed by the state apparatus or elites in control of state machinery. The third world nationalist leaders were most willing to accept these prescriptions, for on the one hand it consolidated their position, on the other hand it provided them with a ready-made solution to many of their problems. Defying the projections of political pundits, ethnicity not only persisted, but many so-called stable 'nation-states' of the developed world too got infested with germs of ethnic politics. It was quite apparent by then that the vortex of ethnicity consisted within it not merely politics, and economics, but there was a very strong psychological dimension to it too, which helped it to persist and reassert itself once it felt threatened.
It is contended in this paper that it is not politics of ethnicity as such, but politics of 'nation-state' or 'nation-building' itself, which is threatening to tear apart the fabric of nation-state system. The crux of the problem lies in our theoretical understanding of the concepts of 'nation', 'state' and 'ethnicity', and our failure to appreciate that theoretical concepts have their limits especially when applied under very different circumstances. These failures on our part lead to what may be described as 'nation-destroying' instead of 'nation-building.' In case of developing societies this might result in state destroying too, for in the name of 'nation-building' we more often than not, put the internal and external security of state into jeopardy.

Most of the states of South Asia to-day face this problem. In Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan & Bangladesh the issue has acquired a critical dimension. In Sri Lanka, India through its direct action (1987) almost took control of the situation and turned the entire affair into an Indian affair. Under the banner of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord of 1987, India deployed 70,000 troops in the island to fight the LTTE. Not only did the Indian Peace Keeping Force fail in its endeavour, but also Rajiv Gandhi had to pay with his life for this intervention; while the problem remains alive for Sri Lanka. Mrs. Indira Gandhi to became a victim of Sikkhism or the Khalistan movement, which India blames is being fanned by Pakistan. India also blames Pakistan for its alleged involvement in Kashmir. Pakistan on its part put the blame on India for her own ethnic problems. These accusations and counter-accusations only serve to complicate the security environment of South Asia, which acts as a negative input into the SAARC system. For the purposes of this paper we however would confine ourselves with the Bangladesh case.

The contentions of this paper would be analysed by keeping the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) issue of Bangladesh in perspective. A brief review of theoretical and conceptual issues on the subject-matter would be undertaken to highlight our present understanding or inadequate understanding of the questions of ethnicity and nation-building. This, we believe would ultimately help the process and cause of nation or state building.
Theoretical Framework

As a political concept ethnicity is of relatively recent coinage used initially by David Reisman in 1953. It is derived from the Greek word ‘ethnikos’ which meant ‘heathen’ pagan and gentile. Due to its recognition as a concept the term is no longer used with such pejorative connotations; though its usage has become synonymous with a minority. A plethora of literature on the subject matter exists, a brief review of some of these is undertaken here.

The Primordialist school of ethnicity focusses on culture. It assumes that ethnic groups are composed of primordial affinities and attachments; that identities are given, not chosen and there is an element of irrationality involved in the entire process. Harold R. Isaacs, a leading exponent of this approach argues;

it is the identity made up of what a person is born with or acquire at birth. It is distinct from all the other multiple and secondary identities people acquire.

According to Clifford Geertz these primary attributes make a person a candidate for nationhood. The approach is useful to the extent that is focusses on the cultural dimension of ethnicity, but it fails to explain inter-ethnic cleavages or even the process of ethnicity being politicised. Besides cultural markers are fluid, one gains ascendancy over other depending upon the exigencies of time and circumstances. Religious identification too is changeable. The Black Muslim movement in the U.S. is a case in point here. For the primordialists ethnic attachments belong to the non-rational part of human personality and as such are potentially destructive of civil society. It is difficult to accept this view, for ethnic identity may be adopted for rational as well as affective reasons to preserve one’s existence or to pursue advantage through group action.

The Cultural Pluralist school too, tends to explain ethnic conflicts in terms of cultural differences. But this approach is an improvement upon the primordialists, for it believes that a plural society is pregnant with conflict, not because each differentiated group tends to form a tight socio-cultural unit or because “there is a formal diversity in the basic system of compulsory institutions.” The conflict emerges because a plural society is characterised by the existence of a dominant group as
well as by the absence of consensus, thus it tends towards a hierarchical system, which results in structural violence. The theory has been criticised on the grounds that not all aspects of cultural and value incompatibility affect inter-group relations equally. Such incompatibilities lead to conflict when one group infringes upon the core value system of the other group. It also does not explain why inter-ethnic conflicts arise.

Moving away from the cultural and dominant-subordinate syndrome, the modernizers see ethnic consciousness and ethnic conflict seeded in the homogenizing process of modernization. The fundamental assumption underlying this theory has been articulated in terms of converging aspirations. Men enter into conflict and competition not because they are different, but because they have been made the same by creating in them the same aspirations, wants and demands through the unitariness of modernity. The assumption can be challenged for it has been found that men enter into conflict because they want to remain different. Karl W. Deutsch whose writings on social mobilisation and communication appears to have influenced most of the other writings on this approach, was in fact one of the first one to point out the limitations of this approach. For him social mobilisation is

“An overall process of change which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life.”

Deutsch suggested that ethnic conflict is the product of something analogous to a race between rates of social mobilisation and rates of assimilation. The proportion of mobilised but unassimilated persons is “the first crude indicator of group conflict.” Modernization fosters ethnic competition as well as ethnic solidarity, as Bates points out,

“ethnic groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members for the components of modernity. In so far as they provide these benefits to their members they are able to gain their support and achieve their loyalty.”

This view of course can be challenged, for it reduces man to an economic and political animal completely overlooking the cultural-psychological dimension of ethnicity. The approach
also fails to explain why ethnic conflicts arise in pre-modern and modern societies.

The Redicals had expected that the main line of division between people would be based on class interests, which would erase the differences of language, religion, caste and other markers of ethnicity. Based on the twin principles of rationality and interest, this group argued that it is economic interest that guides rational man into social action. The inadequacy of this approach to explain human aspirations has been borne out by the experiences of former Soviet Union and East Europe. For the Neo-Morxists ethnicity is a culturalist myth which has to be constructed so it is not a primordial given but a putative reality. Challenging the notion of liberals that a choice exists for the individual to consciously decide whether to assimilate or not, this group argues that not only such a choice does not exist, but is also consciously prevented by powerful others, including the powerful modern state, which permits or insists upon certain identities and refuses other. Here ethnicity does not derive from primordial ties but is a historically contingent construct where the over determining identity is itself determined by the nature of dominance and the constraints of social institutions. 10

Exponents of the theory of 'Internal Colonialism', are of the view that the process of economic development is not a smooth one. It generate disruptions and discrepancies between advanced and less advanced groups. Such disruptions result in a polarization of social relationship into a core and periphery. The core seeks to monopolize and institutionalize its advantageous position through policies aiming to reserve roles commonly defined to have high prestige for its member. This stratification system of cultural division of labour contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identification in the two groups. Acculturation does not occur because it is not in the interests of institutions within the core. Whereas the core is characterized by a diversified industrial structure, the pattern of development in the periphery is dependent and complementary to that in the core. Economic dependency is reinforced through juridical, political and military measures. There is national discrimination on the basis of language, religion or other cultural forms. 11 The overriding concern of the core is to deny the periphery any opportunity to challenge this
stratification. Rothschild\textsuperscript{12} points out, as a consequence of this cultural markers do not remain primordial attributes; they are transformed into politicised discriminators. Members of peripheral groups seek to use the cultural markers as levers to end the prevailing arrangements which for them are not natural, but are the creation of deliberate policy choices on the part of the dominant group. Structural challenges by this group may take the from of a secessionist movement. Combination of culture and economy to explain politicised ethnicity is an important forward thrust taken by this approach. It helps us to explain the disintegration of the state of Pakistan, but it fails to explain situations like that of Punjab, Sri Lanka or Fiji.

These cases demonstrate that rapid economic progress dose not always diminish ethnic aspirations. In other words, ethnic factors may operate independently of economic differentials, a reality the theory of internal colonialism does not recognize.

The above review suggests that politicised ethnicity is not a monocausal phenomenon. It is simultaneously "primordial" and "modern". The need for mobilisation is strongly felt in times of stress and competition. The motivations behind mobilisation may be various. The traditionally dominant ethnic group may mobilise politically to retain its dominance. The subordinate ones may mobilies to acquire equal status or autonomy within the existing framework of state or may even want to secede from it. Based on the nature of demands of ethnic groups, movements may be categorized into: systemic, anti-systemic and extra systemic. The first category which does not challenge the existing power structure includes demands for affirmative action, preferences and equitable treatment. Anti-systemic demands, such as the call for greater autonomy question the existing political system and call for its restructuring. Extra-systemic demands on the other hand, such as secessionist activities, reject the system altogether and claim nation-state status for the ethnic community.\textsuperscript{13} Theories of ethnicity help us to situate or posit the ethnic syndrome in a multi-dimensional wide canvass, from which the analyst may pick up the clues for his own case. But the major limitation of these approaches is their failure to offer us any suggestion or way to get out of this ethnic vortex. There, therefore, is a need to take an alternate perspective.
Alternative Perspective

It is contented here that the root cause of our problems with politics of ethnicity and nation-building, is our misutilization of key concepts of international politics. ‘Nation’ and ‘state’ are two such key and core concepts, having very different meanings and connotations. Yet, we continue to use them synonymously. A state is

“a legal concept describing a social group that occupies a defined territory and is organised under common political institutions and an effective government”. 11

By contrast a nation is

“a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs and a sense of homogeneity”. 15

In the most unambiguous manner the two concepts are quite different. The problem is further complicated by our drive to create a nation-state. The term nation-state is supposed to refer to a situation in which the borders of the nation approximate those of the state. This is a major fallacy of our understanding as Connors 16 points out that less than 10 percent of all states would qualify as essentially homogeneous. Describing the Indian situation Ravinder Kumar 17 argues,

“the political identity of the Republic of India should be defined in terms of a ‘civilization-state’, rather than a ‘nation-state’.

or as Rajni Kothari 18 puts it,

We need to remember that the essential identity of India is cultural, not political or economic. It is one civilization that has withstood various vicissitudes and still endured largely because of its basic identity being cultural. It never had a political center except very recently.

From a civilization an attempt to-day is being made to fashion a single nation, in order to build a nation-state, through the process of homogenisation. The basis of this ‘Indian’ culture has been defined as the upper-caste Hindi belt. This attempt to fashion a homogeneous national culture out of a civilisation has led to a clash of cultures and of languages, for by definition, the cultural traditions whether of religious communities or
language groups are not part of the mainstream. Our attempts at nation building, with our present understanding of the concept invariably sooner or later polarises society along ethnic lines for the very process presupposes the imposition of a supposedly superior culture upon the 'inferior' or less advantaged ones. There is thus a fundamental contradiction between ethnicity as the embodiment of the identity of a separate consciousness and the reality of a modern nation-state. We therefore at this point have to take a pause and question the very wisdom or rationale for having a 'nation state' as such. The actuality of the situation is that, communities or groups, whom we refer to as 'ethnic' groups, do by every measure of definition constitute a nation. An ethnic community is a self-differentiating group. It contains people who share a conviction that they have common interest and a common fate, and they propound a cultural symbolism expressing their cohesiveness. The symbolism is characterized by one or more of the following: Collective myths of origin; the assertion of ties of kinship or blood, be they real or putative; a mythology expressive of the cultural uniqueness or superiority of the group; and a conscious elaboration of language and heritage. They include persons from every stage of life and every socio-economic level. In spite of these communities qualifying for the status of nationhood, we because of our obsession to create a single nation within a state refuse to bestow upon them this status. It is suggested here that this refusal is at the heart of many of our problems. There is nothing wrong in recognising ethnic communities as nations; problem arises only when these groups not only demand the status of nationhood, but also a state along with it. The demand for a separate state is more ofter than not, a creation of our drive to have a homogenous nation-state system. The process of nation-building thus is caught within the paradox of its own dynamics. The process of combating ethnic consciousness only strengthens it. We therefore require a redefinition of the concept of nation-state, such a redefinition would allow political union, economic co-operation even cultural symbiosis to a certain extent, but would not accomodate an over-centralized political and economic order in the interest of group domination. In other words, modern nation-states would be considered as multinational societies, not multi-ethnic or purely plural
societies. At a more fundamental level one might even venture
to suggest to do away with the notion of nation and be content
with the fabric of state. For our purposes, we however would be
content with a redefined notion of nation-state, not because it
fits within the parameters of existing international system; but
because of our conviction that the notion of nation satisfies our
search for 'self' and 'identity'. With this perspective in mind, we
now turn to an analysis of the Chittagong Hill Tracts issue in
Bangladesh.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

The CHT occupies a physical area of 5,093 sq. miles,
constituting 10 percent of the total land area of Bangladesh. Its
population, according to population census of 1981 is 7.52 lacs
which is about 0.9 percent of the national total. The region
comprises of three districts: Rangamati, Khagrachari and
Banderban. Geographically CHT can be divided into two broad
ecological zones: (a) hill valleys, (b) agricultural plains. It is
surrounded by the Indian states of Tripura on the north and
Mizoram on the east. Burma on the south and east and
Chittagong district on the west. Its inhabitants are of Sino-
Tibetan descent belonging to the Mongolian groups. They
closely resemble the people of north-east India, Burma and
Thailand rather than the people of Bangladesh. There are
thirteen tribal groups in the region: Chakma, Marma, Bom,
Lushai, Tanchanya, Tripura, Murung, Ryang, Pankhui, Chak,
Khumi, Mro and Khayang of which the Chakma are dominant
numerically, educationally, socially and culturally. Each tribe
has its own language. The Chakmas speak a mixed language of
Bengali, Pali and Sanskrit written in Burmese script. The
Marma speak Arakanese, a Burmese dialect. The Tripuras
speak a language of their own akin to kachari. Rest of the groups
speak a mixed language of Assamese and Burmese origins. In
the religious context too, they are different from Benglees. The
Chakmas, the Marmas, the Chaks, the Khayangs and the
Tanchanyas are Buddhists. The Tripuras and the Riangs are
Hindus. The Lushai, the Pankhus and the Banjogis are
Christians; while the rest are animists. They have distinct social
norms. Their rituals at birth, death and marriage as well as
their dietary habits and methods of agriculture are very
different from those of the rest of Bangladesh. Apart from these social and cultural differences, the region also has a different political history. Upto 1713, the Rajas of the area were its paramount authority in 1787 the region was ceded to the British by the Mughals, who agreed to accept the quasi-independent status of the Hill people. In 1860 the British administration took two important steps in favour of the Hill people. First, the CHT was made a separate and independent district. Prior to this, it was a part of Chittagong district. Second, except for the representative of the Governor General-in-Council of India who administered the CHT, the administrative staff, including the police was locally recruited from the tribal population. The tribal chiefs collected revenues and dispensed traditional justice in tribal courts. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900, popularly known as the Hill Tracts Manual, was another important administrative reform introduced by the British. It may be worth mentioning that the Manual had never been repealed, as such may be considered still as valid law. 22 It laid down a detailed constitution for the administration of CHT. The area was divided into three circles: the Ccakma, the Bohmong and the Mong. Each circle was placed under the jurisdiction of a tribal chief who was responsible for collecting revenues and managing internal affairs. In addition to these three circles there were three sub-divisions under the supervision of sub-divisional officers who were responsible to the Deputy Commissioner of the district. The tribal’s administrative set up was based on a three-tiered structure: in descending order—The circle, the mouza and the para. A major objective of this regulation was to minimize interference in tribal affairs by the district administration. The manual also prohibited all migration into the district. A non-tribal was required to obtain prior permission to enter or settle in the area. 23 The Manual recognized the communal right to set aside a portion of mouza land for forestry: It also introduced measures to protect Hill people from unscrupulous money-lenders, whereby a ceiling on interest rates was imposed and loan documents were required to be registered in order to be enforceable. 24 These policies of the British administration not only kept the Hill people protected and isolated from Bengalees, but also created a privileged class which could serve its interests. In 1920 the Manual was
amended and the region was declared a “Backward tract”. The Government of India Act, 1935 declared the CHT a “Totally Excluded Area”. In 1937 the charge of the administration of CHT was taken away from the chiefs and vested in the District Commissioner. The chiefs retained their power only in an advisory capacity. The British who had projected themselves as protectors of the Hill people, in fact refused to protect them when the critical and decisive moment came for them on the eve of India’s partition in 1947. During the period the three tribal chiefs demanded recognition as a “Native state” from the British, the Congress and the Muslim League. The Marma chief demanded a union with Burma. They pleaded with the Congress to be merged with the Indian union. But at the end of the day they felt betrayed, when despite their strong protests and plea that 95 percent of their population constituted of non-Muslims, the Bengal Boundary Commission headed by Cyril Radcliffe awarded the CHT to Pakistan. In this case Mountbatten’s 25 explanation was:

The whole economic life of the people of Hill Tracts depends upon East Bengal that there are only one or two indifferent tracts through the jungle into Assam, and it would be disastrous for the people themselves to be cut off from East Bengal .......... in a sense Chittagong, the only port of East Bengal also depends upon the Hill Tracts............... 

The CHT was thus treated as the hinterland of the port city of Chittagong. A second strong factor behind this award was the issue of partition of Punjab. Pakistan did poorly in the partition of Punjab, in order to make this up Radcliffe awarded the CHT to Pakistan.26

Our objective in this section was to establish two points: (a) The Hill people of Chittagong constitutes a separate nation, distinct from Bengalees. It would be conceptually wrong to designate them as tribal groups. The term tribe denotes a group, generally rural which is bound by traditional political structures to which people are linked by the mechanisms of traditional political obligation.27 These groups generally do not fall under the jurisdiction of any state.28 (b) By handing over CHT to the state of Pakistan, the Bengal Boundary Commission established the reality i.e. states can not be created on the basis
of a single nationhood alone. Through its acceptance of this award the Muslim League too corroborated this position. The award of CHT of Pakistan contradicted the logic of partition.

The State of Pakistan and CHT

The process of alienation of the Hill people of Chittagong from mainstream state politics started in 1947, right after their formal incorporation into the state of Pakistan. Their resistance to this incorporation earned them the suspicion of Pakistani elite. Subsequent policies adopted by them in the name of ‘national development’ and ‘nation-building’ only heightened their sense of alienation. Tutored in the traditional western notion of nation-state, the elites of Pakistan opted for a policy of assimilation. In order to create a homogeneous society they sought to impose the culture of West-Pakistan upon the people of East Pakistan. Rest is history to-day.

The Hill people of Chittagong were dismayed at the gradual erosion of constitutional safeguards to their special status, by the regime of Pakistan. Initially their special status was preserved. The constitutions of 1956 and 1962 maintained the CHT as an excluded area. Through an amendment brought about in 1963, the constitution of 1964 did away with the special status provision of CHT. In 1964, the Dhaka High Court which had recently been given jurisdiction on CHT, struck down the CHT law on the expulsion of non-natives undesirable persons as ultra vires to the constitution of Pakistan on the ground that it violated the freedom of movement of citizens, a fundamental right guaranteed in the constitution of Pakistan. 29 Regime perception in both of these instances, was largely influenced by its conception of nation-state, which left little scope for special status of exclusiveness.

The Kaptai dam which was constructed (1957-62) by the Pakistan Government to expedite the process of economic growth in East Pakistan, is viewed by the majority of Hill people as one of the main causes of their economic woes. The dam submerged an area of 400 sq.miles including 54000 acres of cultivable land, making up 40 percent of the districts total acreage. Nearly 10,000 ploughing and 8,000 jhumiya (shifting cultivation) families comprising more than 100,000 persons were adversely affected. The government was able to allocate
only 20,000 acres of flat cultivable land of relatively inferior quality to settle a total of 11,761 of the 18,000 displaced families. It meant a net loss of 34,000 acres of cultivable land on average in the new settlements, whereas previously the 10,000 ploughing families had an average of 6 acres. Compared to the loss, the rehabilitation and compensation were very limited. The government estimation of compensation amounted to $59 ml but only $2.6 ml was actually allocated. The Hill people further allege that public officials engaged in the rehabilitation program indulged in corruption and discrimination between the Hill people and Bengalee settlers. The dam also caused irreparable damage to ‘jhum’ cultivation. Due to scarcity of land the ‘jhum’ cycle was shortened to 3-5 years (an average ‘jhum’ cycle before inundation was 7-10 years). This resulted in declining soil fertility, low yields from jhum and lack of interest among farmers. Erosion of constitutional safeguards coupled with forced economic miseries inflicted a major psychological blow on the Hill people. In order to offset these affronts and sense of alienation, they on the one hand sought refuge and shelter within their own community; on the other hand perhaps as a fallout of the feeling of deprivation, the communist party was founded as an underground organization by the Hill people in the late 60s. Seeds of ethnic politics thus were sown in the state of Pakistan by its own elite, through its politics of nation-building.

The State of Bangladesh and CHT

On the eve of independence in December, 1971, with only 2 percent of its population constituting of non-Bangalees, Bangladesh presented a neat case of almost being a nation-state in the classical sense of the term. In the words of a noted analyst, Bangladesh contained:

a rarity in the modern age state system: a state which also happened to be a nation linguistically and culturally homogeneous and united by the spirit and experience of the people’s centuries long resistance against foreign and alien aggression, domination and exploitation. Eighty-five percent of this nation also happened to have religious homogeneity. Such a rarity indeed in the modern age should have, as
expected rendered nation-building a non-issue in Bangladesh. Her own existence as an independent state symbolized the limitations of conventional measures of nation-building. Yet today she finds herself in an ethnic muddle, which has both an internal and external dimension. Ironically enough the present situation is a creation of her own elites, who seemed to have indoctrinated themselves in the virtues and craftsmanship of modern nation-building in the pattern of their former masters, and counterparts elsewhere in the world. For them the essence of nation-building contains in creating a homogeneous nation or culture. In the context of Bangladesh it implied the imposition of Bengalee culture over other cultures, existing in the country. Shiekh Mujib made this point. When he called upon the Hill people of Chittagong to forget about their separate identity and to become Bengalees. He thereby epitomised himself as the father of Bengalee nation, not of the entire nation of Bangladesh. On February 15, 1972 a deputation led by Manobendra Narayan Larma, called on Prime Minister Shiekh Mujibur Rahman and set forth the following basic demands of the Hill people:

1. autonomy for the CHT with its own legislature:
2. retention of the CHT Regulation, 1900 in the constitution of Bangladesh:
3. continuation of the tribal chief’s offices;
4. constitutional provisions restricting the amendment of the Regulation and imposition of a ban on the influx of non-tribal people.

Shiekh Mujib categorically rejected these demands, which were basically an expression of Hill people’s desire for retaining their separate identity and autonomy. Mujib’s refusal can be explained in terms of his conception of a modern nation-state, wherein he was playing the vital role of its chief architect, such concession, according to the perception of Bengalee elite, could set in motion centrifugal tendencies. Jinnah the father of Pakistan, through his attempt to impose the Urdu language upon Bengalees, sowed the seeds of Bengalee nationalism. Mujib the father of Bangladesh likewise through his refusal to accept the Hill people as a separate group of people distinct from Bengalees, articulated the sense of Jhumma nationhood among the Hill people Manobendra Larma became the main proponent.
of the movement. On March 7, 1972, he formed a regional political party—the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity or JSS to exert constitutional pressure on the government to accede to the Hill people’s demands. He fumed in the parliament:

You can not impose your national identity on others. I am a Chakma, not a Bangalee. I am a citizen of Bangladesh—Bangladeshi. You are also Bangladeshi but your national identity is Bengalee............. they (Hill People) can never be Bengalee.34

Political significance of this statement needs hardly any elaboration. Larma, a member of the minority community was educating us—the dominant Bengalee community — the distinction between a ‘nation’ and ‘state’. Had we accepted and understood his position, Bangladesh perhaps today would not have found itself in this chaotic situation. If Mujib’s Bengalee nationalism with its emphasis on cultural linguistic unity had failed to accommodate the aspirations of Hill people, Ziaur Rahman’s Bangaldeshi nationalism with its emphasis on Islam fared no better. These two brands of nationalism are the creation of Bengalee elite, reflective of their dominant mode of thinking, and internal feuding. Shiekh Hasina’s 35 recent statement, “there are no differences between Paharees and Bangalees, we are all Bengalees” neatly ties up the position of our elites.

(The 1972 constitution of Bangladesh made no provision for a special status of the CHT. Article 28 of the Constitution whereby all disadvantaged citizens of Bangladesh are given preferential treatment could hardly satisfy the Hill people. As if these measures were not enough, the Parliament on 23 January, 1974, passed a bill declaring Bangladesh a uni-cultural and uni-lingual nation-state. The stage thereby was set for carving out a homogeneous society. Patterned around the dominant Bengalee culture. Larma 36 expressed the anxiety of his people at this cultural intrusion by centre, when he outcried in parliament.

“our main worry is that our culture is threatened with extinction .......we want to live with our separate identity.”
The Hill people are of the opinion that after the Kaptai dam project the most harmful damage to their socio-economic structure has been done by the government policy of settling Bengalees in the Hill tracts. In 1947 the Paharees constituted more than 98 percent of the CHT population. Bengalee population in the Hill tracts rose to 9 percent in 1956, 12 percent in 1961, 40 percent in 1981 and by 1991 Bengalees constituted 50 percent of the total population of the Hill tracts. The demographic onslaught took place with an utter disregard for the land and civil rights of the Hill people. It violated Rule 39 of CHT Regulation, because the chiefs were not consulted regarding the matter. It also breached the long standing convention whereby settlement of land was granted by the DC on the basis of a report from the concerned mouza headman. While this requirement may be waived in special cases, but to dispense with it altogether and settle thousands of persons is certainly malafide. It is believed that the policy is a deliberate attempt on the part of government to turn the Hill people into a minority in their own land. Activities of Jamaati-i-Islam, which wields overwhelming influence over the settlers is also viewed with apprehension by the Hill people. It may be mentioned that of the 30 Bengalee Muslim representatives elected to the three district councils in 1989, about 26 are pro-Jamaat and nominees of the Jamaat. The Amir of Jamaati-i-Islam of Rangamati District Committee, personally selected 8 out of 10 Bengalee candidates to the District Council in consultation with the local army commander and government officials. The Jamaat controlled Rabeta-i-Alam is an influential NGO in the area.

Political and cultural grievances aside, from an economic point of view too, these settlements made little sense. A misconception prevails regarding the availability of cultivable land in CHT. 89 percent of CHT is forest land. Of the remaining 11 percent, 4 percent is presently being cultivated. As the man-land ratio declined because of decrease in agricultural land and growing population pressure, the Hill people were forced to move into the forests and practice shifting cultivation on basically fragile land. According to experts, a society that practices shifting cultivation with a jhuming cycle of 2—5 years can support 25—50 persons per sq. mile. The present population
density of the CHT is 140 persons per sq. mile and the jhuming cycle has been reduced to 2—3 years. Yet a secret government memorandum from the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner ordered the DC of the Hill Tracts to arrange 5 acres of hilly land, 4 acres of mixed land and 2—5 acres of paddy land for each newly settled Bengalee family. The question quite logically arises where would the land come from for about 40,000 families unless the original CHT residents were evicted from their land. These settlements have fomented an anti-Bengalee feeling among Hill people who view them as intruders and usurpers to their land and position.

The anti-Bengalee feeling among Hill people is further exacerbated by the role played by a section of unscrupulous Bengalees who today are in control of commerce and trade, in the area. The Hill people by their very temperament and cultural traits keep away from commercial and employment activities. Indigenous employment in major industries like the Kaptai project and Chandraghona Paper Mill has been less than 1 percent. Only 40 Hillmen got jobs in the Chandraghona Paper Mills where the total working force is 6000. Job opportunities that opened up as a result of the Kaptai dam project do not benefit the Hill People, these have been taken up by the more competitive Bengalees, while the Hill people keep on wondering, on whose land the dam has been constructed? who is still paying the price for it? and who is reaping the benefits of this project? A survey conducted as late as in 1979 found that 69 percent of the Hill people felt their food and economic crisis was caused by the Kaptai dam; 89 percent said they were displaced by the inundation of their homes and land; 87 percent said they had to face serious trouble in building new homes; 69 percent complained about insufficient compensation and corruption of government officials; 78 percent complained of having no opportunity for jobs in the hydroelectric project; and 93 percent said that before the Kaptai dam was constructed their economic condition was better.

Zia-ur-Rahman perceived economic backwardness to be the main cause of Hill people’s discontent. He therefore instituted the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) in January 1976 to gear up development works. The initiative was praiseworthy but what Zia apparently had failed to perceive was
that at issue was not economic deprivation, but an acute sense of alienation. A feeling prevailed among the Hill people that somehow they have lost control over their lives. Loffer 44 summed up this position in the following words:

Once upon a time the CHT were not only rich in timber and bamboo, but they also produced a surplus of paddy and cotton. Hardworking farmers were comparatively well-off, and really needy people were few in number. Now-a-days after millions of dollars of development aid have been spent needy people abound, rice and cotton have to be imported, and timber and bamboo have become so scarce that the formerly magnificent houses of the indigenous people gave way to poor huts.

Incidentally, some hundreds years ago, the CHT were the "Kapasmaha1", the area producing the cotton for the world famous Dhaka Musselin. The English Colonial system is known for its destruction of the Indian cotton industry, but cotton was still grown in the Hill Tracts some 30 years ago and served as a major source of cash income. Now there is a Cotton Development Officer in every sub-district; but nothing is being done for the promotion of new cotton seeds. In Rangamati cotton is not grown anymore. In the former ‘Kapasmahal’, today local homespun is made from imported cotton so much for our development activities!

The GOC of Chittagong Division is the Chairman of the Development Board. In political terms, it was an unwise decision, for the Paharees perceived that ‘development’ activities would have to coincide with the military’s interest. They had reservations about the construction of roads and highways which they believed were strategically built for easy military movement.

Joutha Khamar or collective farming is a major undertaking of the Board. It is a resettlement scheme for the landless ‘jhumiahs’. Each family has been allotted 5.25 acres of land on individual basis for cultivation of a variety of vegetables, fruit, tree, crops and plants. These lands are mostly of B and C category having slopes of 20 to 40 percent and suitable only for fruit and tree crop cultivation. None of these farms has any wet-rice cultivating land where the jhumias can produce rice, their staple food. The plan for cultivating five or six varieties of crops
on one acre each goes to divide each family land of 5 acres into five or six fragmented plots, requiring five or six different types of skills and experience to farm them successfully. It cuts across the very basic principle of economy of scale and collectivisation. More importantly, since the settlers are shifting cultivators they have little or no experience and tradition in cultivating the new crops, the result therefore is failure.

The Board also planned for production of perishable goods without planning for their marketing, preservation, storage or processing, since the nature of these productions is basically subsistence; the producers therefore need and must ensure certain and steady income to survive. Their survival becomes vulnerable in the face of uncertainty of marketing of their produce. This vulnerability of the Hill people's survival make them dependent on the Bengalee middlemen or trading class which maximises their profits. Thus while the indigenous producers subsist somehow, the Bengalee trading class flourishes. The government now realizes that horticlture has been a flop and favors rubber plantations, to be managed by the government directly or by Bengalee middle-class entrepreneurs, who were given special conditions to acquire vast tracts of what was formerly tribal jhum land. The Hillmen neither have the financial means nor know the procedure of acquiring these lands. This has accelerated the process of greater resource and income transfer from the area.45 Quite understandably, therefore, the Hill people are suspicious of government's economic development plans and projects. They believe that these would rather facilitate the influx of outsiders and ultimately they would become aliens in their own land. This, belief strengthens their demand for political autonomy.

The regime of President Ershad was to some extent responsive to the demand of political autonomy. Ershad tried to address the question politically. In order to create an environment of political understanding, four general amnesties were given between April, 1983 and September, 1989. Taking advantage of these amnesties the Priti faction of Shanti Bahini surrendered while the Larma faction continued its fight. The government decided to introduce monthly honorarium system for the three tribal chiefs and Headmen. It also undertook to supply electricity free of cost to many of the villages. In 1988,
further new settlement of Bengalees into the area was stopped by a governmental order. The most important political move of the Ershad regime was its initiation of political dialogues with the representatives of the JSS. Between October, 1985 and December, 1988 six sessions were held between the two parties. In December, 1987, the JSS put forward a five point demand to the Bangladesh government. These demands are:

1. Provincial autonomy for CHT. The area to be named Jhummaland;
2. Without the prior holding of a referendum no constitutional amendment to be brought about in the case of CHT;
3. Withdrawal of all non-local people who have settled in the area after 17 August, 1947. Unconditional withdrawal of all cases against the JSS members;
4. The introduction of a separate banking system for CHT. Top priority to be given by the centre for the development of the area. A quota system, for the recruitment of Hill people in civil and defense services, to be introduced;
5. Unconditional release of all Jhum people from detention. Dismantling of cluster villages. Withdrawal of all military camps from the CHT.

The government delegation rejected the charter of demands on the plea of it being unconstitutional. Instead, it placed a nine point programme, to the JSS which contained an outline for the creation of local districts. This was rejected by the JSS. Local leaders too opposed the creation of local districts. The Chakma Raja Devasish Roy declared at a public meeting in Rangamati that local districts could not provide a solution to the CHT problem.

The government, however, passed the Local Councils Act in March, 1989, for constituting three local government bodies in Rangamati, Banderban and Khagrachari. The Act provided for devolution of 21 subjects to these councils. These councils gave proportional representation to the Hill people and Bengalees. The Bill reserved the post of Chairman of the three district councils for the Hill people. Elections to the three district councils were held on June 25, 1989, amidst a call from the Shanti Bahini and JSS the supreme political body of the former, upon the people of CHT to boycott the elections. The government
on its part took elaborate security measures to ensure smooth holding of the elections, each voter was granted Tk. 50 in gratuity for exercising his right of franchise. Some voters even got doles of rice and other benefits for working in favour of polls. These governmental measures quite logically raises questions about the fairness of these elections. A large number of Hill people continue to have reservations about the District Councils. These reservations center around the following points:

1. The District Council Act, 1989 has no constitutional basis and can be changed or repealed at any time;
2. The presence of Bengalee settlers is formalized and legalized;
3. Only minor powers are given to the Councils, mainly concerning development;
4. Land rights of the Hill people are not safeguarded and there are no provisions for the return of land illegally acquired from Hill people by Bengalees. Moreover, only 10 percent of the total area of the Hill tracts is under the jurisdiction of the District Councils;
5. De-facto control does not lie with the District Councils, but with the military.

It has been alleged that through these local bodies government is trying to drive a wedge among the Hill people. There is a deliberate policy of discrimination against the Chakmas, the dominant indigenous group who make up the bulk of Shanti Bahini; for instance in the CHT area the Chakma tribe constituted 48.12 percent of the areas indigenous population while the Marma tribe constitutes 27.78 percent. Yet in the three District Councils together the Chakmas have been given 20 seats, while the Marmas have 19. The Chakmas were not allotted seats proportional to their population, while the second and third largest groups, the Marma and Tripura were given more than their due. Positive dividends of a long-term nature, can not be expected from this kind of a policy of divide and rule. Despite repeated demands, the present BNP government has not dissolved the 3 District Councils, though the rest of the District Councils, in the country have been dissolved, such double standards in the administration, enhances the distrust of the Hill people towards the centre.
CHT in Rebellion

In his societal analysis of the factors that propells a nation towards rebellion Ted Robert Gurr 51 observed -

the potential (for rebellion) would be greatest in a nation most of whose citizens felt sharply deprived with respect to their most deeply valued goals, had individually and collectively exhausted the constructive means open to them to attain those goals, and lacked any nonviolent opportunity to act on their anger (Emphasis added).

(In case of the Hill people, the Bangladesh government through its mismanagement of various sensitive issues and measures taken in the name of nation-building had instilled in them the perception that their most valued goal, i.e. the right to exist as a separate nation, was under threat by the dominant Bengalees. Initially Manobendra N. Larma tried to fight it through constitutional and political means. Having failed in this the Hill people opted for the military means.)

Mujib's rejection of the 4-points demand of the Hill people's, prompted their leaders to form a revolutionary party. On 15 May 1972 the Rangamati Communist Party (RCP) was formed under the leadership of Manobendra N. Larma. The following day the Parbattya Chattagram Jon Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) was formed as an open platform of the RCP. The RCP was to maintain a low profile, while the JSS was to carry out the task of political mobilisation. Mujib roused Hill peoples anger again in 1973 when he declared in pre-election meeting in Rangamati that all Hill people would be known as Bengalees and would have no other identity. This irrational consistency on his part, drove the JSS to immediate action. On 7 January, 1973 a military wing Shanti Bahini was added to JSS. In response the government mounted military offensive three military cantonments were set up in the CHT each at Ruma, Dighinala and Ali Kadam. Zia-ur-Rahman kept up the military operations. He tried to get the Disturbed Areas Bill passed in parliament in 1980. This move failed because of strong opposition from the parliament members, including his own cabinet members.

If passed the law would have armed the police authorities with powers to arrest or shoot a person on reasonable suspicion in not only CHT but other areas where there would be law and order situation. The political implications of a drastic measure
like this can not be lost upon any observer. It is a reflection of our disturbed minds where we are failing to come to grips with the basic issue - nations can not be created by force or intimidation. The situation remains unchanged today.

On its part the Shanti Bahini introduced its own administration and judiciary in the interiors of CHT. Its membership comes overwhelmingly from the dissatisfied educated Chakma youths. With the active co-operation of the Mizo dissident group from the adjoining Indian state of Mizoram and the Karen secessionist group from Myanmar, the Shanti Bahini is believed to have obtained sophisticated arms supply. The Shanti Bahini today is involved in a protracted armed struggle against the government of Bangladesh with the main objective of attaining a 'Jummaland' for the Hill People's, within the political framework of the state of Bangladesh. The nature of its demand is anti-systemic, not extra-systemic, as such a political solution to the issue is very much probable. This has been acknowledged by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia herself. During her first ever visit to the area in the wake of the Logang massacre, in a statement at Khagrachari she expressed the belief that a political settlement to the CHT issue could be found within the existing constitutional framework of Bangladesh.52

We are yet to see the evolvement of such a settlement, meanwhile the CHT continue to remain under the de-facto control of military. The escalation of the conflict at this level has ruptured the fabric of state security, both internal and external.

Repture of State Security

CHT could have been one of the most resourceful region and coveted hill side of deltaic Bangladesh. Yet today it is one of the most volatile and politically irritating part of the country. Our failure to come to the grips of the problem, so far has kept us from a comprehensive solution of the issue, this has posed a threat to our internal and external security. Components of internal security entail above all a viable and stable political and economic system; the creation of large, complex but flexible institutions that would ensure participation and autonomy for the various groups existing within the system. In our case we have not only failed to create a stable system, but the problem is compounded and made more difficult due to intense rivalry.
and factionalism in politics. Both position and opposition count political credits through discrediting one another. The achievement of one group is construed as the failure of the other, as such lack of consensus on basic issues is pervasive. The poverty ridden economy of the country is caught in a quagmire of low level equilibrium trap characterised by negative domestic savings, low investments, widening trade deficit, high unemployment rate, food deficiency, unprecedented growth of population, external dependency etc.\textsuperscript{53}

The country is also exposed to environmental threat. Externally its security is perceived to be threatened by the preeminence of India which seeks to establish its hegemony over the smaller states of South Asia.

The ongoing turmoil in CHT has exacerbated our vulnerabilities in all these sectors. Due to intense rivalry among political parties we are unable to move towards a consensus on this issue. Ershad refused to induct any member of Parliament or politician into the national committee empowered to carry on dialogue with the JSS. Under the chairmanship of Planning Minister Air Vice Marshall (Retd.) A.K. Khondakar, its members included, Bangladesh’s High Commissioner to New Delhi, Home Secretary, a Director from the Foreign Ministry, DC Chittagong Division and GOC Chittagong Division. The JSS had serious reservations about the composition of this body, but the government for some unknown reasons refused to involve politicians in this dialogue. The present BNP regime continues to side track the parliament on this issue. A 9—member committee formed by it on July 9, 1992 to solve the prevailing problems in the CHT, has failed to earn the confidence of the opposition and Hill people as well, for it does not include within it the three parliament members elected from the area on Awami League ticket—the major opposition party. This kind of political myopia and lack of political accomodation is most unbecoming of a regime that has peoples mandate behind it. On its part the opposition too does not lag behind to discredit the government on every count, even to the extent of distorting facts. Hasina to our utter surprise and dismay could declare, “Mujib gave CHT autonomy; Zia created crisis (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{54}.
The CHT might have provided our “national” leadership with an issue to settle their scores with each other or to indulge in self-glorification, but unfortunately for the state of Bangladesh such bickerings have serious political consequences. It polarises national politics, impedes the growth of political institutions of a participatory nature, poses a threat to the smooth functioning of democracy. Apart from these destabilities in general, it has today polarised CHT along racial and communal lines. The recent racial riots in Logang and Rangamati are cases in point here. Thanks to our ‘nation-building’ endeavours, today the Bengalee community in CHT is pitted against the Hill people, while the Hill people are pitted against the Bengalees. At a rally the Bengalee community went to the extent of demanding an abolition of the special privileges enjoyed by the Hill people. Failure of our political system to contain the issue, led to an intervention by the military. Mujib felt this necessary to check the rise of Shanti Bahini, and to some extent the same compulsions remain. But before we move on to rationalise the induction of military into this matrix, we have to ask ourselves: under what circumstances was Shanti Bahini created, who really is its creator — the Hill people or the Bengalee elite? Today there are about 30-35,000 members of security forces in the area. They have been stationed there to provide security to the Hill people and Bengalees against the atrocities committed by Shanti Bahini and to defend the territorial integrity of the country. A failure to do so should in principle nullify the rationale of their being stationed there.

Today the region is almost under a state of undeclared martial law, not only do local army commander have seats on the CHT Co-ordination Committee at district and thana levels, the Army also has a seat on the National Council Committee for the CHT. Without the prior approval of the GOC of Chittagong Division, who chairs the CHTDB, no Hill student can seek admission in Chittagong Medical College or Engineering College in Chittagong. In the name of ‘security’ refugees returning from Tripura and Bengalees as well are being kept in ‘cluster’ villages. These people have become totally dependent for their subsistence on the military. They can not live from jhuming anymore and are prevented from taking to horticulture. The only economic option open for them is the Food
for Work Programme, of jungle clearing carried out in the name of counter-insurgency measures financed by the U.S. AID. This is a classic case of a self-sufficient people being turned into a dependent one. Already much damage to soil fertility in CHT has been done due to overjhuming, but the FFW 'jungle clearing' by far exceeds any destruction of soil fertility. There have been constant allegations of human rights violations committed by the army on the Hill people. It is alleged that these are committed in the name of 'counter-insurgency' and 'security' measures. While there might be some exaggerations in these allegations, but the important factor here is that this is so perceived and believed by the Hill people. It heightens their feeling of insecurity and drives them into exile and into the arms of Shanti Bahini in other words, it reproduces what it purports to extinguish.

It has also been suggested that constant outmigration and consequent decrease in the number of the Hill people, not only threatens the identity of the indigenous people of CHT, but also makes it an area of constant unrest which suits the purpose of the army. The army has its vested interest in projecting its strategic importance and lay claim for increased allocation of funds, playing up the counter-insurgency card. The Hill people are of the opinion that the military has a biased attitude towards the settlers. During the District Council elections of 1989, many of them were convinced that it is not their vote, but the preferences of the military controlling the polls, that decide who will be elected; at the same time they were convinced that the military tutelage could be bought by a certain number of lakhs of taka. The outcome of such belief and perceptions is an increase in insecurity and sense of alienation among the Hill people. The JSS as well as the local indigenous people or area have been consistently demanding a political solution to the issue, and removal of the military from the area. It is common knowledge that the continued presence of the military in the area is impeding the process of political settlement. This goal cannot be realized with the people feeling insecure, in this case the guarantors of 'security' themselves have become a major cause of insecurity for the concerned people. The operations and maintenance of the military in the area also puts considerable strain on our poverty — ridden economy. Once the military is
removed, these funds can be released and used for genuine state-building and people oriented activities.

An increase in the activities of Shanti Bahini and race riots in the area suggest that military has not been successful in providing security to either the Hill people's or Bengalees settled in the area.

In the context of external threats, India's alleged involvement with Shanti Bahini is raised with much fanfare by all quarters 'concerned' in Bangladesh. What evidently these 'concerned' quarters fail to or refuse to raise is rather more important for state security i.e. by turning CHT into a military district, we are deliberately hemming in our chances of reaching a political settlement, thereby making room for an increase in the activities of Shanti Bahini which may or may not heighten India's involvement. India's involvement in the issue is to a large extent circumscribed by the nature of her relations with Bangladesh. During the Mujib regime when relations were cordial between the two countries, there was co-operation between two governments to jointly put down the insurgency. The situation however has changed since 1975. To-day there is no second opinion about India's pre-eminence in the South Asian region. Her policies toward her smaller neighbours are driven by a clear regional security doctrine, popularly known as the 'Indira Doctrine'. This is a kind of 'Monroe Doctrine' that strongly opposes outside intervention in the domestic affairs or conflicts of other South Asian states. If a South Asian state genuinely needs external assistance, it has to be sought from within the region, including India.

During the last decade India has demonstrated to us her determination to carry out this doctrine in an attempt to attain favourable outcomes for herself in the region. These are: (1) India's efforts between 1983 and 1990 to end the Sri Lankan civil war through political and military pressure, (2) India's 1988 military intervention to prevent a coup d'état in the Maldives, (3) India's 1989-90 trade dispute with Nepal. 58 Admiral Nadkarni, India's Navy Chief, has recently advocated a two-pronged strategy to strengthen India's position as a regional power. He first advocated continued growth of Indian naval power, since in his view,
major powers come to regard a country as a regional power when she begins to demonstrate her ability to interfere with their freedom of action in the region. Secondly he urged the growing need to bring diplomacy and military power in face with each other as it is necessary to also project a complementary image of military power in the region.” 59

In the context of this strategic thinking and her record of chequered relations with Bangladesh, it is expected of New Delhi to want to retain an effective say in a matter that might warrant external involvement, should Bangladesh desire so, or alternately the Shanti Bahini itself might ask for assistance from an unfriendly source. The Indians do not rule out the possibility of Chittagong port being leased to any external or unfriendly power. Partha S. Ghosh 60 a noted Indian social scientist is on record for having stated,

India’s failure at the time of partition to press for the merger of the CHT with India, since the majority of its population was non-Muslim must be considered as short-sighted.

The same is true of Bangladesh to-day: that she has allowed her only non-Muslim majority area to be so alienated from her that it is been used as a source of interference by external powers, is indeed a case of short sightedness on the part of her leadership. Today any comprehensive solution of the problem needs India’s favourable attitude. She has got involved in two very important ways in the issue. These are (1) laying down of arms by the Tripura based members of Shanti Bahini, (2) repatriation of the Hill people who took refuge in camps of Tripura. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to India, she has been assured by her Indian counterpart of India’s sincerity and willingness to resolve the issue. India declared that she would return all the refugees to Bangladesh. 61 But India denies the harbouring of insurgency, so the problem remains alive for Bangladesh. The present BNP regime is posited in a more favourable position than its predecessors in handling the issue. A consensus prevails among the intelligentsia, politicians and people in general that we have had enough of experimentations with CHT. The state can not afford any more of these. In order to achieve a comprehensive
solution we have to open political dialogues with the genuine representatives of the Hill people.

The JSS also has to be inducted in, in the process, for without its participation and endorsement of the final package, a resolution to the CHT problem can not be found. On its part the JSS has expressed its willingness to open unconditional negotiations with the BNP government. The ball is in the court of the government now.

Conclusion

The present problem in CHT is the creation of Bengalee elite. Mujib's call to the Hill people to forget about their separate identity and become Bengalees opened up the pandora's box for us. Subsequent regimes through different measures in essence continued to toe the line of Mujib. It is our obsession with the concept of 'nation-state' and our failure to comprehend the limits of this concept, that has led us into the vortex of ethnic politics, which today has acquired an external dimension. As has been stated earlier the states of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India are also bedevilled with the same problem. In the name nation-building these states too have put their internal and external security at stake which is impeding the growth of a regional spirit in South Asia.

For a comprehensive settlement of the issue at the state level, it is suggested that a pluralist and secular approach be taken that would devolve upon the constituent units 'positive identity' through political, cultural and economic autonomy.

These measures along with the removal of military from the area are likely to instil a sense of confidence among the indigenous population about their national identity, which it is argued is likely to make them more accommodating towards the landless Bengalee settlers in the area.

The devolution of autonomy in whatever form it may be provides us with only a partial solution to the problem. It is contented here that these conventional solutions have their limits. Devolution leads not to a solution, but only to a subsequent conflict. In order to build a more civilised and rational world we have to build up a movement to defeat the ethnic ideology, for essentially it is a negative ideology that imposes barriers upon human communication. So a true
approach to ethno-politics must run at two levels simultaneously, on the one hand we have to give the ethnic groups the recognition that they aspire to, on the other hand we have to start thinking of ourselves as human beings, having common aspirations and failures, instead of groups or sub-groups. Our commitment would have to be to oppose oppression and oppressive systems and also to build a new universal human consciousness.
Notes and References

1. Walker Connor, 'Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying.' World Politics. V. XXIV # 3, April, 1972
2. Urmila Phadnis, 'Ethnic Tensions in South Asia: Complications For Regional Cooperation & Development'. Workshop -1, South Asia 8-13 April, 1985 Centre For Policy Research, New Delhi, P.7.
4. Ibid
8. Ibid.
15. Walker Conner, op. cit, p 333.
16. Ibid, p. 334
22. The 1989 Act which sought to repeal the 1900 Regulation was to come into
effect through a Government notification in the government Gazette. No such notification has taken place to date.


27. Robert H. Batess (b) op. cit.


29. Raja Devasish Roy, op. cit. P.7


32. Ibid.


38. Raja Devasish Roy, op. cit. pp. 9-10


56. Life is Ours, op cit, p. 4.
57. L. G. Loffer, op. cit. p. 4.
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