Chapter 6

Democracy and Conflict Management in South Asia

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6.1 BACKGROUND
South Asia is currently termed as the most dangerous region in the world. The long historical and social cleavages along religious, linguistic and ethnic lines, and the protracted conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir have made the region vulnerable to conventional hostilities and nuclear confrontation. The nuclear dimension is perceived as the most ominous development for the security of the region. But neither the enhanced conventional military power nor the nuclear capacity acquired by two major states of the region can provide real security for the region. Whatever their strength or deterrence, it seems unlikely that they can solve the conflicts of the region, or prevent war. In this context, the major assumption of this paper is that strengthening democratic institutions and processes both within and among nations can only resolve conflicts and ensure stability in the region.

6.2 MAIN OBJECTIVES
The paper explores the ways in which democratic governance can enhance the capacities of the state actors to deal with conflicts and find acceptable solutions. It examines how the new security threats in the region arise especially from the weaknesses of the states in terms of sustaining and consolidating democracy in the face of contextual and systemic problems. The paper analyses the contextual problems of
social plurality and endemic poverty that constrain the democratic process to provide adequate conditions of public order within their borders and prevent instability and internal violence to spill over into the regional sphere.

The systemic problems that arise from the workings of a democratic system are examined in South Asian context. These include the shortcomings of political leaders, hollowness of democratic institutions, the inability to reduce the power of the military and of the bureaucratic establishments, weakness of civil society and failure to check corruption in order to form viable building blocks of a stable regional order and contribute towards the resolution of conflicts. The research also examines the issue of political culture in democratisation process. It raises the question whether the traits of South Asian culture in varying forms are detrimental to the idea of 'consociation' or consensus in which various groups, parties, or states sharing different values and goals live together in relative harmony, guarantee certain kinds of toleration and ensure stability of a regional system.

The paper probes whether South Asia can emerge as a stable and secure region where state structures remain strong with democratic institutions functioning effectively, and where the legitimacy of both frontiers and regimes is not widely called into question. In this context, the paper explores the perceptions of the small states of the region in regard to regionalism and state strength – whether they stand in opposition to each other or they reinforce one another. The paper also asks how and whether the democratic states can become the essential building blocks with which regionalist arrangements can be constructed. A comparative look at the ASEAN may be made which demonstrates that regional cooperation in security and economic stability, in fact, contributes to strengthening – not weakening – national resilience of the member countries.

The paper looks at the broadening of popular participation in democratic framework within nations and its impact on regional security in a diachronic manner. The research focuses on the political energies and interactions of communities of people – not just on state institutions – so that we can think in different ways about concepts such as national interest, national policy, and causes and resolution of conflict in regional term. In fact, the paper argues that if relations between nations are indeed a political process of continuous
interactions between significant elements of whole bodies politic, a much broader focus on regional peace process is essential in changing relationships between states in conflict. The paper examines the role of dialogue, power-sharing, open press, quality of human rights, and other democratic means of communications for reduction of conflicts. The paper finally looks into the growing involvements of people, and the role of leadership of the regional states in the formulation of domestic and regional political issues in order to sensitise new awareness of common interests, and convergence of domestic and regional priorities and needs.

6.3 DEMOCRACY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Politics inevitably leads to conflict, but democracy building at the same time is an intrinsic part of managing conflicts. Theorists of democratic politics would argue that liberal or pluralistic democracy has a better chance of conflict management and peaceful coexistence. Immanuel Kant more than two hundred years ago talked about 'perpetual peace' in democracies as opposed to authoritarian or totalitarian systems. He argued, based on examples in history, that liberal democracies have generally found other ways to settle their disputes rather than war or unmanageable conflicts. However, as democracies in many cases behaved aggressively, we have also not enough cases to justify sweeping generalisations. The wars or conflicts are not always the faults of non-democracies, as history of colonialism illustrates. The most convincing case that can be made is that if democracy can be an open, transparent and accountable system of governance, its built-in safeguards can act against interstate military conflicts or serious internal conflicts.

People in a democracy often find it easy to believe the worst about another country with a closed political system. When decisions are made behind closed doors, it is difficult to tell whether the reasons given are the real ones, or contrived ones. In fact, regimes that are not accountable often can manipulate the mass media. They can easily mobilise a society for war, or suppression of legitimate rights of minorities or dissident voices. By contrast, it is much harder to convince in a well-functioning democracy that war or conflicts are necessary against another country or dissident ethnic, religious or political groups. Therefore, a strong case can be made that democracy has a unique strength to manage and resolve conflicts with more open and accountable
governments. In fact, there is a general acknowledgement, based on empirical evidence, that democracy has an efficient structural means of managing and preventing violent conflicts. Democracy is crucial in building and sustaining peace both within and between nations.

6.4 DEMOCRATISATION IN SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT
The countries of South Asia, as Gunar Myrdal once observed, "display enough similarities in basic conditions to make comparisons relevant, and enough differences to make comparisons rewarding for an analysis of the main causal relations". One striking similarity that marked these countries has been the diversity in social structures – based on religion, caste, ethnicity and economic opportunities. India exemplifies this characteristic in the most conspicuous way. The country that has two-thirds of the population of the region has a unique demographic and ethnic make-up – Hindus constitute 82 per cent of its population, Muslims 12 per cent, and the rest is divided among the Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and the Jews. The linguistic division is more pronounced in India – there are fourteen major languages. But the religious conflict is more explosive.

It has been argued that neither secularism nor democracy that the leaders like Gandhi and Nehru advocated could take roots in Indian society and culture. In fact, the secular policy that Nehru fashioned for the Indian National Congress 'became the dominant political paradigm after independence'. Nehru perceived that, with modernisation and economic development on the basis of science and technology, the influence of religious and ethnic leaders would decline. Unfortunately, there can be no question that the immediate past history, the present condition and future prospects of Indian society have a close dependence upon Hinduism. The recent rise of Hindu nationalism reflects the growing domination of Hindus in the Indian polity that negates the Nehruvian concept of Indian national identity. The number of violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims rose in recent years. In most cases, the victims were members of the minority communities. The ascendancy of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to state power gave further boost to Hindu revivalism in Indian society. The emergence of Sikh militancy was another disturbing factor sparking Hindu nationalism. In the prevailing circumstances, one author has aptly remarked, "secularism in South Asia as a generally
shared credo of life is impossible, as a basis for state action impracticable and as a blueprint for the foreseeable future impotent”. Even educated, westernised Hindus increasingly seem to say, “Hindu India, why not?” In fact, this changing attitude, accompanied by violence and coercion, has led to an important shift in India’s fragile democratic consensus on secular state that “held together diverse ethnic, religious and social communities since independence toward the new configuration of a Hindu nation”.

The caste system in India, for example, reflects obsession with power and prestige in organising society on religious basis. In such a system of hierarchical society, subordinates are not considered worthy of rewards or potentials. They are only perceived to be performing their duties without responsibility. Politicisation of caste system often led to the emergence of caste associations and their leadership role in the Indian political process. But, Indian political landscape has been dominated overwhelmingly by the high caste Hindus at the central as well as regional levels. Most political leaders of India – Gandhi, Nehru, Indira, Desai, Rao, Vajpayee, Basu come from the high castes. In fact, neither the socialist attempt to establish a welfare state nor the western model of democracy has been able to cope with the social and religious consciousness of diverse population of India.

The plurality of South and South Asian societies also encouraged leadership along identities of language, religion, ethnicity or other primordial affiliation. In fact, the partition of British India and the creation of Pakistan saw the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah; the disintegration of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh witnessed the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the heads of two states. Similarly, many social movements in the states of the region continued to be waged on the basis of primordial loyalties demanding political and policy concessions. Sometimes, these movements take extreme forms as separatist movements or struggle for independence creating their own heroes, leaders and legends. These loom large across Asia, and particularly in South Asia. The struggle for independence in Kashmir, separatist movements in Northeastern India, Sikh movement in Indian Punjab, Sindh’s Mohajir movement and Baluch agitations in Pakistan, and Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka are some of the major problems that continue to test the endurance of South Asian leadership.
6.5 SOCIAL PLURALITY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The above-mentioned conflicts, as Atul Kohli aptly remarked, created serious political 'crises of governance' in the region. These conflicts usually occur when economically deprived groups do not find easy way to satisfy their needs and hence search for power irrespective of their economic status. Under the circumstances, it is often easy for the ambitious individuals to become leaders advocating those grievances and pursuing them through different phases, sometimes manipulating antagonism between communities. In the absence of effective institutions to cater to the demands of the aggrieved groups, political leaders often take the benefit of a desperate mass psychology to escalate the conflict and assert their leadership. The traits of South Asian political culture, in varying forms, therefore, are detrimental to the idea of "consociation" or consensus where different groups and parties sharing different values and goals live together in relative harmony, guarantee certain kinds of toleration and ensure stability of a democratic political system.

The post-Cold War period has witnessed a new appreciation of democratisation in the countries as a tool for conflict management, and to ensure human rights. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the perception that terrorism finds fertile ground in undemocratic societies has grown. Paradoxically, there is also increased 'fragmentation' of politics and societies in terms of cultural, religious and ethnic lines in many countries of the world. This happened in the absence of clear ideologies, lack of ethics, and unfair competition spurred by democratisation and globalisation processes. In case of South Asia, this is not new. In fact, the major challenges facing the states of South Asia since their independence has been how to evolve nations out of a vast heterogeneity of social, cultural and regional entities. Since the region represents extreme diversity in terms of religious, linguistic and ethnic configuration, the roots of conflicts often lie in it, and democratisation process has further complicated the situation. On the other hand, democratisation also opened up windows of opportunities for the communities of the region to manage conflicts through dialogue, sharing of power, and creating trust among them.

The bonds of religion and language led to a variety of militant insurgency movements in India posing severe strains on democratic governance. Punjab was mired in violent ethnic-religious conflicts
involving Sikh militants in confrontation with New Delhi as they sought greater political autonomy. In Gujarat, the backward castes and the Muslims were engaged intermittently in violent clashes on issues of affirmative actions and rights. In South India, regional nationalism still persists on linguistic identities. In the hilly areas of Northeast India, the Nagas, Ahoms and other native people fought bloody wars for many years. The current insurgency in Kashmir along religious lines is the most explosive, with serious cross border implications for Pakistan. In fact, Kashmir problem poses a serious threat to regional peace in South Asia, as the two major states of the region have acquired nuclear capability.

There is an agonising realisation in most countries of South Asia that democracy as a mode of social interactions and governance has accentuated conflicts in the region’s social mosaic. One author has aptly remarked that the electoral politics in an open and competitive society like India “not only consolidates the existing divisions in the society, but political parties and political elites in their quest for power and vote tend to exploit and aggravate inter-communal divisions”.

6.6 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT INDIA AND PAKISTAN

There is a strong perception from small states of South Asia that the growth of Hindu resurgence in India and Islamic militancy in Pakistan can, to a large extent, be explained by the mobilisation of people by political leaders on the basis of religious, linguistic and ethnic identities. The uneven process of globalisation further exacerbated the situation. The rise of Hindutva in India, for example, was fuelled by a section of middle class Hindus who mobilised the poorer sections of their community by invoking religion and displaying extremism. While Hinduism as a religion is liberal and has universal outlook, Hindutva is rigid, extreme and narrow. It is basically a political ideology and has nothing to do with spiritual, moral or philosophical aspects of Hindu religion. Hindutva seeks to mobilise upper caste Hindus for capturing political power and establish economic hegemony. The upper caste Hindus, especially those from Gujarat who settled abroad, send money to Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) for promoting fundamentalist version of Hinduism.

A leading Indian Magazine *Outlook* in its issue of July 8, 2002 says in its cover story “The Crisis in Hinduism”, “One of the World’s most
liberal religions is in danger of being perverted. The seize is from within, a way of life has been seized upon as a means to political power and a religion held hostage”. In fact, the recent Hindu-Muslim communal violence in Gujarat, in which several thousand people were killed, was a direct consequence of fear of losing coming elections. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal, with the help of ruling BJP Chief Minister Narendra Modi, planned and executed most horrified communal carnage in Gujarat.

In Pakistan, Islamic extremism plays a similar role. The Jihadis have a clear political agenda. In fact, these Jihadi groups are products of struggle for political power in the region. The successive regimes in Pakistan promoted narrow and sectarian Islam to seek legitimacy for their power. Although President Pervez Musharraf is not currently interested to promote militant Islam, it would not be easy to reverse the past trend. The need for meaningful dialogue between political leadership of India and Pakistan is, therefore, imperative to resist the use of religions for intra-state and inter-state conflicts in South Asia. Only an enlightened democratic leadership can clear the breeding ground for religious extremism. Asian leadership styles historically are constructed around certain key qualities that place precedence on harmony over confrontation and unity over fragmentation. The Asian values are also noteworthy for their humanistic thinking – moral authority, tradition, family, trust and wisdom. These values could, indeed, make a significant contribution to dialogue within democratic set up for the future.

The leaderships of all communities in South Asian mosaic should be sensitised to the consequences of “exclusion” from mainstream society that democracy promotes. Tolerance and empathy should form the link between leaderships of different communities living within one society or state, and this can be achieved through dialogue and democratic practice. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela played a historic role in cultural coexistence of diverse races and religions by promoting multicultural society and respecting differences. In this context, South Asian leaderships should recognise and define cultural transformation to their constituencies. They should realise that cultural transformation is an on-going process, and it is one that cannot be avoided. It is the duty of the leadership to promote the positive outcome of cultural coexistence,
and the contribution that can be derived from the cultural diversity. The leadership of each community should therefore work together to build an infrastructure that supports cultural diversity, and civic education is one key element. In fact, civic-cultural education can provide the key to unlocking the challenges of cultural transformation, and that democratic leadership can only ensure that type of transformations taking place in society.

6.7 DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

6.7.1 Political Party

In most countries of South Asia, political institutions, particularly the political party and parliament, are very important in the growth, development and sustenance of democracy. It is also clear that where parties are strong, competitive and organised on a mass base, democratisation takes lively and durable shape. A comparison between India and Pakistan shows that the growth of Indian National Congress as a large, complex and a broad-based party helped in sustaining a democratic order and democratic leadership in India. On the other hand, the weak and narrow-based Pakistan Muslim League could not develop strong leadership after the founding leader passed away. It, therefore, failed to resist the inroads of the military leadership of Ayub Khan in state power and subsequently as the head of a faction of the Muslim League.

6.8 DEMOCRATISATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES

It is rather unusual for the biggest party of India – the Indian National Congress – not to hold party elections at various levels since Indira Gandhi took over the party leadership in 1969. In Bangladesh also, there is a continuing pressure for holding party elections in the country’s two major parties, but these did not materialise. In fact, in India, the emergence of sectarian and regional parties in recent years indicates the failure of national parties in acting as a melting pot and a base for political leadership to grow. In Pakistan, both the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan People’s Party of Benazir Bhutto were highly personalised organisations without internal governance. In case of Bangladesh, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the major opposition Bangladesh Awami League never faced elections in selecting the top leaders.
Political parties often do not show interest in real issues of electoral fairness and transparency. The voters often feel helpless and cannot have a real political choice. They go to the ballot box as they attach importance to their right to vote. But they are influenced by rhetoric, money and muscle. Increasing commercialisation and 'criminalisation' of politics pose greatest challenge to institutionalisation of democracy in India as well as other South Asian countries. Many express the apprehension that politics will remain 'saleable' at the 'poll-market' in the coming years unless people get educated and rise above poverty. Some blame the political leadership that fails to take effective political and legal actions for clean and transparent electoral process. In the long run, of course, democratisation cannot proceed unless people's empowerment takes place at the local levels. Political parties can play a vital role in this process. But even in India, after so many years of democratic trial, political parties are increasingly becoming segmented and factionalised, and lost in their own rhetoric and petty quibbling.

The geographical spread of India and lack of ideology in political parties make the stability of large coalition tenuous. As a result, the parties can switch sides and opt out of an alliance without any string of conscience. The quick parleys between TMC and ADMK, and the coming together of INC and NCP indicate the speed that the parties can come together and break. A stable coalition or consociation in India, however, depends on the behaviour and leadership qualities of the politicians. This is not easy, given the character of political leaders, who are extremely power-centric, and the parties, whose social or ideological bonds are weak. Thus the possibility of destabilising the government at a short notice will continue to exist in Indian political landscape at the dread of the electorate. This is so, despite the electorate giving a worthy mandate, each time they are asked to cast their vote.

Before the 1999 General Elections in India, the political leaders were wishing for a 'hung parliament', or expecting that 'a new destabiliser' will emerge when a government is installed. This is understandable, as coalition governments, in general, and a hung parliament, in particular, enhance the powers of each elected representative beyond that envisaged or intended by the architects of the Constitution. The basic reason for rejoicing by a political leader with a coalition government is due to the fact that the parliamentary
form of government does not let the leadership issue be settled by the electorate. In India, therefore, the system throws up some 1500 hopefuls for the leadership position. Any one who can manoeuvre or manipulate a simple majority of the elected representatives can hope for the invitation to be the Prime Minister. Thus, the political parties and Prime Ministers are driven to fulfill as many of the wishes of the Members of Parliament backing the government as possible through enlarged cabinets or a variety of assorted rewards. The key issue of selecting a leader, the longevity of the government and stability of the platform for delivering performance will continue to be crucial concerns for democratic governance in India and other states of South Asia.

The stirrings for democratisation in recent years have led to important changes in electoral systems in most South Asian countries. The growing fight against vote-rigging and other forms of electoral fraud is ushering in far-reaching improvements in the Asian political culture. The successive elections in Bangladesh seemed to indicate the extent and significance of electoral fairness and transparency and how people attach growing importance to those processes. The declining role of the military in national politics is increasingly bringing the political parties to take more meaningful role in political and social life of these countries. Unfortunately, due to their structural weaknesses, the parties are not yet sufficiently prepared for these changes; they are caught between the traditional and encrusted structures of the political system, on the one hand, and the growing expectations of citizens' movements and self-help organisations, on the other.

This means that the parties all too often come under both internal and external pressures because of weaknesses in their programmes and structures. This situation is largely due to the parties having seen in the past as merely an instrument for gaining and securing of power by the omnipotent leaders. Some studies have also come out recently highlighting the role of political parties in the dynamic democratisation process. The growth of non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups, ranging from women groups to human rights forums, legal aid societies across much of South and Southeast Asia, is helping the political parties to take up issues and programmes as their agenda for political and social mobilisation.

The organisational strength of the Indian National Congress was one of the important reasons for the military not to intervene in Indian
politics. However, it was evident that Indira Gandhi throughout her rule tried to bypass the party to strengthen her personal image and popularity. In the process, she failed to encourage new leadership and weakened the party. Eventually, her son who inherited power after her assassination could not develop the party to the extent that it could return him to power the second time around. In Bangladesh, the creation of Bangladesh Nationalist Party by the military-turned civilian President Ziaur Rahman enabled his widow Khaleda Zia to power in the first democratic election in 1991. The same scenario occurred in Pakistan when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party could bring her daughter Benazir Bhutto as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The party system, therefore, is crucial in the growth and development of new leadership in most democratic countries of the world. Institutionalisation of political parties is a priority in democratic politics, without which both intra-state and inter-state conflict management in South Asia is extremely difficult.

6.9 PARLIAMENT’S ROLE IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Legislature that represents the people and acts as their voice is at the core of democratic governance. For most South Asian states, the legislatures or the parliaments act as the symbols of democracy, freedom and representative government. The wave of democratisation in the beginning of the 1990s heightened the expectations of the people from their elected parliament not only to make laws, but also to act as a place to resolve conflicts. As an important pillar of democratisation and the representative body of the people, parliament should have supervisory activities on the government’s executive branch to ensure accountability and responsiveness to the people. The members of parliament, through the committee system, often become aware of what is going on in various agencies and departments of the government. They are able to gain knowledge, information and exposure to take leadership role for the improvement of various ministries, acquire skills and develop dedication to the service of the people.

In most countries of South Asia, therefore, the parliaments act as important forums for conflict management. The collegiality, problem-solving skills and teamwork that the members of parliament learn are valuable for the new leaders of the democratic era. The Parliament, the main forum of democratic system where leadership grows and
conflicts are resolved, often lacks capacity to perform those functions and oversee the executive effectively. The constitution provides for representative institutions to manage the affairs of the state. But, in reality, the capability to win a contest for representation depends on a host of cultural factors of caste or community, economic condition, and social background. The Parliament, therefore, represents not the best and the ablest, but the 'rich, famous and the ruthless', and not discharging the vital conflict management function.

The absence of democratic process in the parties in most South Asian states severely hinders the growth of political leadership, particularly women and disadvantaged communities leadership. The women are often very active in social organisations and NGOs, they also help the political parties in various ways – including procuring funds – but they are not well represented in the parties at various levels. The democratisation process unfolded an environment of competition and power conflict that need to be managed through a continuous process of bargaining and compromise. Unfortunately, the past years witnessed serious volatility in political process with unmitigating conflicts in South Asian societies. Political agitations, street demonstrations, strikes and hartals, and religious-ethnic violence vitiated the political environment, disrupting normal life and distorting democratic process.

The 'hollowness' of the Parliament in most countries was reflected in its inability to stem the tide of violent politics and cast doubt among the people on the leadership of the elected members. The controversial and often unnecessary debates within the Parliament, and the frequent boycott of its sessions by the opposition members aggravated the situation. The ineffectiveness of the Parliamentary Committee System to oversee the conduct of affairs of the Executive and the bureaucracy also undermined the power of the Parliament as an institution. The inclination of most Prime Ministers to bypass the Parliament in formulating major decisions, and the reluctance of the Leader of the Opposition to attend parliamentary sessions, particularly in Bangladesh, contributed significantly to the weakness of the parliament as an important democratic institution. The role of the Speaker has been highly partisan and, as such, unacceptable to the opposition members. The prolonged absence of the opposition members of parliament in sessions in successive democratic regimes
has eroded the legitimacy of representative democracy and undermined the performance of the governments in Bangladesh.

6.10 CIVIL SOCIETY'S ROLE IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
Democratisation intimately relates to civil society. Weak civil society leads to authoritarian system and more conflicts. Robert Putnam talks about civil society as ‘social capital’ that plays an important role in conflict management in a society. The civil society is also recognised as an important partner in democracy and development. In the context of South Asian states, the role of national and international NGOs - often called the civil society - is also important because they have developed a big constituency in these states. For example, almost one-quarter of Bangladesh’s foreign assistance is utilised by the NGOs that are often treated as civil society. Therefore, it is very important to assess the role of civil society, meaning particularly the role of various NGOs in democratic consolidation and in search of justice and human rights as well as forming political agendas in the countries of South Asia.

In many Latin American and African countries, a history of regime repression has resulted in civil society as a form of opposition, especially when organised political parties were often prohibited or severely emasculated.

6.11 LIMITATIONS OF DEMOCRACY IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
Radical critics of western democratic electoral process may have some strong reasons to question the significance of competitive elections in developing countries “where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed.” The governments in these countries are more responsive to demands of the politically active and best organised groups, and equalising potential of competitive elections is further diminished by persistence of clientele network, powerful urban and rural patrons, easily mobilised vote banks, machine type party organisations and so forth. In Bangladesh, India and other South Asian countries, both the procedures of democracy – free and fair elections, the rule of law, and political parties – and the substance of democracy in terms of efficiency, democratic ethos, civil society and meaningful participation in public spheres are influenced by the global and regional environment and inducement.
The UNDP Report since 1999 has been terming Bangladesh as one of the most corrupt countries of the world along with India and Pakistan. The World Bank also very recently came up with the same finding, placing Bangladesh within the six most corrupt countries. Both the reports came heavily on the political leaders, political parties, bureaucracy, police administration, business and professional segments. The reports justifiably highlighted the concerns of the donors and development agencies urging the government and the wider public to take appropriate measures in curbing this harmful and pervasive menace. In fact, in most South Asian countries, corruption has become such an enduring pattern of public life that it poses a threat to democratic governance. Many of the economic and social programmes of the governments have been impeded by this phenomenon.

Corruption has been inhibiting the operation of market forces in South Asian countries, creating bottlenecks in the administrative process, preventing justice and fairness, and dampening the spirit of public service. The World Bank Report 2002 indicated that about 30 per cent of the development fund is siphoned off by corrupt means in Bangladesh, which may, in fact, save 2.9 per cent of its GDP by curbing this social malaise.

In South Asian states, people often enter politics because it is the main avenue for economic power, as the process of economic development is led and directed by political leadership and administrative functionaries. Corruption, therefore, takes place in various arenas of the political system: legislative, executive and judiciary. In extremely unequal but highly competitive societies, where election determines which group of people will wield power, corrupt patterns are likely to emerge in the electoral arena. People spend money and contribute to party funds not out of a sense of commitment to healthy democratic politics; such instances are indeed rare now. Money is spent by candidates or provided by contributors chiefly because they expect something in return. Political parties and leaders, if they are to survive, require patronage. They are, therefore, involved in financial arrangements that at least border on corruption.

South Asian societies are historically prone to corruption. The culture of corruption is the legacy of long alien rule. History records that the Mughal governors and administrators indulged in corrupt
practices and accumulated huge sums of money. The British rule was not also immune from corruption. The inflow of external assistance in the development process and the temptation to use the funds for political or private gains by the elite groups in the societies accelerated the incidence of corruption on a wider scale. Most of the aid funds provided to the developing countries like Bangladesh get their overwhelming justification from alleviation of poverty to help achieve 'sustainable development'. But, in the implementation process, 'leakage' takes place, distorting developmental objectives. The most vulnerable sectors are utilities, infrastructure, construction, and government purchases. In some South Asian countries, like Bangladesh and Pakistan, politicisation of the police and the judiciary has also led to widespread corruption by these public officials. Most political leaders and political parties often use mastaans, i.e., extortionists, for their ends and corrupt the administration through patronage and financial benefits which they also share with them.

Once the values and ideologies between and among political groups and political parties are relegated to the background, politics becomes what an author calls "a contest between the rich, the famous and the ruthless". People find less difference whether a politician belongs to the Bangladesh Awami League or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The main concern has become how to go to power and have access to perquisites and privileges that it endows. The electoral arena has become violent, money and muscle power replacing the age-old honesty or devotion to people's welfare. Cynicism and disregard for moral and legal principles are now reigning among a large segment of political activists who are often sheltered by political parties. In fact, the ubiquitous nature of politics has already intensified social insecurity; organised crimes, pervasive violence, lack of confidence in the (unaccountable) police and corruption in public institutions have undermined the ethos of citizenship and the image of the nation.

Democratisation, as our review indicates, has been taking place in most South Asian countries mainly in terms of its procedural definition i.e., elections; the substance is still very shallow. The degree of participation, the quality of debate, and the availability of real political choice are often questionable. The current trend of 'Prime Ministerialism'— in particular the inclination of the ruling party to
perpetuate power through patronage and intimidation — casts shadow over democracy in Bangladesh. The consecutive two years of US Human Rights Reports on Bangladesh — 1998 and 1999 — brought into focus the fragility of the democratic process, particularly in terms of pervasive violence in politics and use of police by the incumbent regimes for political ends. In India, the increasing use of force in Kashmir with a deployment of more than half a million soldiers has been straining the democratic character of the country.

The most crucial structural constraint of leadership in South Asia is its endemic poverty. The countries of Southeast Asia have generally enjoyed economic success in the post-war period. Over the past forty years, steady economic growth in most of these countries produced congenial social and political environment that encouraged leadership in various sectors of the society. The developmental character of Southeast Asian states contrasts sharply with that of South Asian states. India — home to more than one billion people — followed an inward-looking economic policy for more than four decades. The socialism espoused by Nehru concentrated on building up domestic industry, with a large role assigned to the state-owned enterprises. Judging by its own objective after forty years, it has failed to do so. Mass poverty in India has declined much slower than in any other Asian developing countries. In 1960, South Asia had a per capita income of $658 (at purchasing power parity), East Asia including China of $869. By 1993, South Asia’s GDP per capita had risen to $1,370, whereas East Asia’s had risen to $11,088 — a spectacular difference in performance by any standard.

South Asia’s poverty challenge, however, is most seriously undermined by the excessive preoccupation of its two major states, India and Pakistan, with defence and national security. Both democratisation and development of the region have been adversely affected by the trade-off between defense and development expenditures. Over the past five and a half decades, the two countries developed a conflict culture only occasionally interspersed by cooperation. The two countries fought three and a half wars — the latest one took place in Kargil over the Kashmir issue in 1999. Kargil turned out to be the worst conventional conflict between the two nuclear weapons states. It claimed 2000 lives and drained Rs 8000 crore. Kashmir has itself become inseparable from nuclearisation, as
one Indian leader remarked about changed "geo-strategic location." Nuclearisation has in fact lent a dangerous edge to India-Pakistan strategic rivalry intrinsically more volatile than the US-USSR conflict in the Cold War era. A purely internal event can precipitate a huge bilateral conflict. The glimpses of cooperation in the late 1980s and early 1990s initiated through the SAARC process soon proved transitory. The defense spending of the two countries reached to the highest levels in the past year, raising alarm about the economic and social conditions of the people. Pakistan's annual defence expenditure of more than $3 billion, combined with an external debt of $32 billion, pushed her to the brink of an economic collapse. India made an all time high defence allocation last year increasing it by 28 per cent ostensibly to strengthen her traditional security and, more importantly, to develop nuclear capability. The nuclear tests conducted by the two countries in 1998 have added a serious dimension. The cost of maintaining full-scale nuclear arsenals for each of these countries has been estimated at $750 million per annum.

The social and political costs of nuclearisation dwarf all costs. The poor safety culture in the region, and poor command and control systems have made the region extremely vulnerable to nuclear accidents, risks and false alarms. In fact, the nuclear dimension has made the region the worst global flash-point since 1998. It aggravated the fifty years of conflict-culture, representing the biggest danger since the Cold War. Former US President Bill Clinton urged India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT during a tour in the region, which he called "the most dangerous" in the world. The SAARC, having made modest progress in the early 1990s, is not moving because of security mindset. Confidence-building measures by the leadership of the region must be initiated through dialogue, consultation and negotiations. The role of the United States is crucial in this process in encouraging the two nuclear states to mitigate conflict through dialogue and changing the old mindsets.

Globalisation provided hope for significant poverty reduction, but at least five major South Asian countries are still struggling to make necessary adjustment programmes to reap its benefits. The regional growth patterns in critical sectors, including agriculture, industry and manufacture, have not recorded any perceptible increase; the low regional growth of 3.1 per cent in the last decade persists. Though the
estimates of incidence of poverty vary widely in the region, the basic fact that all the seven countries in South Asia have been deeply entrenched in mass poverty remains unchallenged. The 1992 Report of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation appointed by the Colombo Summit of SAARC estimated that 330-440 million people, i.e., 30-40 per cent of the total population of South Asia, were still below the poverty line. In fact, the chronic poverty in most countries in South Asia has come up as the critical agenda item at the regional level.

In fact, India’s large size with a population exceeding one billion is divided by a variety of historically formed social factors such as language, religion, caste and gender. The social mobility in India, however, has been lower compared to that even in other South Asian countries. India, of course, has been fortunate in sustaining an almost uninterrupted parliamentary democratic system since its independence. But the political milieu could not create dynamic economic and social structures for continued growth and development. The benefits of democracy could not be transformed into economic and social development. The Indian parliamentary democracy remained as a political system “of elite, for elite, and by elite”.

This is equally true in case of Pakistan and Bangladesh. One noted development specialist aptly remarked in the context of Pakistan, “My rude awakening came quite early after a decade’s experience with Pakistan’s development planning ... What had really happened was that while national income had increased, human lives had shrivelled, as the benefits of growth had been hijacked by powerful pressure groups”. It is, therefore, not just the pace of economic growth that matters for poverty alleviation, but also the kind of growth and the political framework within which it takes place play a more important role. The political leadership in South Asian context should be fully sensitive to this in order to make democratisation more meaningful.

6.12 POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, DEMOCRATISATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

In the second half of this century, as a large part of the world emerged from colonialism, the problem of how democracy might be made to flourish in the unfamiliar soils preoccupied some of the best minds. In this quest, the newer democracies of Asia, Africa and Latin America
began to attract much interest. In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars like Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki were concerned about the future of democratic governments with "an image of the disintegration of civil order, the break down of social discipline, the debility of leaders, and the alienation of citizens". They sketched a grim outlook: de-legitimised leadership, expanded demands, overloaded government, political competition, and nationalistic parochialism. The end of the Cold War symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of an historical epoch. It transformed not only the fundamental underpinnings of security alliances, it also eliminated the principal philosophical and geopolitical challenge to liberal democracy and the market economy.

The critical issue, today at the outset of the 21st century, is not whether democracy will survive, or indeed, it is in crisis, but how well leaders and institutions in democracies can meet the expectations and needs of their citizens. As Huntington argued in his famous book The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century that the new democracies must now deal with the "tortuous problems of developing values and processes" for consolidation. How they will be made? They will be made by the methods of democracy, and by the political leaders in governments and oppositions who have the wisdom to recognise that in politics no one has a monopoly of truth and/or virtue. Negotiations and compromise among political leaders lie, what Huntington called, at the "heart of the democratisation processes".

Democratisation in these societies ridden by caste, ethnicity, language and religious cleavages is not necessarily the natural or most likely system of governance. On the other hand, its failure is also neither predetermined nor inevitable. Much depends on the political leadership – their attitude, behaviour and commitment to democratic values and their willingness to compromise, on the loyalty of the opposition, and on the elite decision made at critical transitions. A comparative analysis of leadership performance in South and Southeast Asia suggests contrasting features between the two regions. The decolonisation process in most of these countries produced a number of 'great leaders' but their performances varied widely in the face of hard realities of statecraft and rising expectations of the people.

Most countries of South Asia, in the aftermath of their independence, adopted the twin goals of nation-building and economic development.
Most of them also were fortunate to have their founding leaders as the heads of state or government to guide the nations in the formative years to the desired goals. India, which was the largest and the most populous in the region, faced four major tasks of nation building: national integration, economic growth, social justice and political democracy. Given the country’s long history of disunity and fragmentation, it was natural that it would give priority to integration. The role of Mahatma Gandhi – a great strategist and guide of Indian freedom movement – was more of an advisor to the government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and did not assume a formal role.

Nehru was the real architect of the modern Indian state. His famous formulation ‘tryst with destiny’ gave him a moral standing like Gandhi, but more on rational and intellectual levels than on ethical grounds. Nehru’s contribution lies in giving a firm institutional basis to a democratic system and creating an aura of a great Indian nation. Nehru had a firm hold on both government and the party, but he was more than that. He articulated the idiom of Indian politics in terms of democracy, secularism, socialism and non-alignment. Nehru was very much concerned about the diversity of Indian nation. But as a rational and modern man, he thought that this would be reconciled with the functioning of a democratic system and achieving an industrial-scientific society. However, after running India for more than one and half decade, he was dismayed at the “centuries-old narrow loyalties, petty jealousies and ignorant prejudices engaged in mortal conflict”. He was simply horrified to “see how thin was the ice upon which we are skating”.

Nehru’s choice of economic development strategy was a grand design based on ‘state-led’ industrialisation in India. He emphasised on central planning and heavy industries to achieve a solid foundation of growth and equity. Unfortunately, as we will examine later, this proved disastrous for India in the long run. Nehru was also a great leader of Non-Aligned Movement – ostensibly to keep a distance from taking a side in the hey-days of the Cold War. Nehru did give a priority to the defense efforts of India, but he was not motivated like his daughter and grand-son to project the image of a militarily powerful India. No wonder, Nehru was rudely shocked when India was defeated in the 1962 ‘border war’ with China.

The leadership of Indira Gandhi, who inherited power from her father Jawaharlal Nehru, won the 1971 general elections. The old
Congress Party had split into two, and the segment led by Indira Gandhi never developed the hallmarks of an organised party: regular membership, internal party elections, or a second or third tier of leaders with support from the grassroots. Instead, Indira Gandhi adopted a populist slogan, \textit{garibi hatao} (away with the poverty) and used her considerable leadership skills to establish direct links with the majority of Indians, those living in poverty. Having risen to power in 1971 on a wave of populism and socialism, she fought and won the 1972 state elections in the shadow of a regional war that India had 'won' and that had led to the dismemberment of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh.

The rise of a populist Indira Gandhi had several major political consequences: especially important was the organisational decline of the Congress (I) Party. The more Indira Gandhi’s power came to be derived from a mass following, the more she bypassed established intermediate leaders and sought to appoint new party officers herself. Over the short run, as long as Indira Gandhi’s popularity was unchallenged, this strategy of top-down political appointments helped consolidate power. The strategy had, however, long term costs. It tended to alienate from the Congress many who had independent power bases. Over time, these individuals have sought to combine their oppositional energies. Indira Gandhi’s system of top-down appointments often put in powerful positions individuals who would not necessarily have been the choice of the Congress’s grassroots membership. This development also weakened the Congress by diminishing the legitimacy of its lower-level leadership.

The performances of Indira Gandhi as a leader had not been satisfactory both in democratic politics and in the economic field. There was a growing realisation in India in the early 1980s that she might not come back to power in 1985 election. Indira Gandhi’s attempts to alleviate poverty had not been very successful. As a result she had failed to consolidate her populist support into a stable coalition. Indira Gandhi’s strategy to win support from the majority Hindu community at the expense of other minority communities was counter-productive. For the first time since independence, religious themes resurfaced in Indian politics at the national level. While complicated, the government’s failure to deal with the demands of the Sikhs in Punjab state for religious and political autonomy resulted in
political turmoil and terrorism. Growing Hindu-Muslim problems, though quite complex, and variable in origin, also undermined the government’s performance in keeping law and order.

Indira Gandhi’s son Rajiv Gandhi who came to power after her attempt to solve such regional disputes as the Sikh crisis in Punjab state did not make much headway. The failure that probably cost him most in electoral term was his inability to rebuild the Congress(I) Party. Internal elections were announced after many year, but after considerable intraparty struggle, they were abandoned. Replacement of the top-down hierarchy with a bottom-up structure posed a real threat to the existing party structure, including Rajiv’s leadership. So it was abandoned, and Rajiv found himself without a dynamic organisation to help him through the elections. No wonder, the transfer of power from Rajiv Gandhi and his Congress(I) to V. P. Singh’s coalition government at the end of 1989 was relatively smooth, emphasising once again the strength of India’s democracy.

6.13 PERFORMANCE OF NON-CONGRESS LEADERSHIP

India entered the 1990s with non-Congress leadership and committed to decentralising its politics, enhancing its economic growth through liberalisation measures, and improvement in the lot of its masses in poverty – an agenda on which the Congress leadership has not been very successful in the past decades. In foreign relations, the non-Congress leadership headed by Prime Minister V.P. Singh moved to improve its relations with neighbouring states. Indian troops were withdrawn from Sri Lanka in March 1990, and revived economic and security agreements with Nepal. The formation of a coalition government by V.P. Singh of the Janata Dal with the support of BJP and CPI (M) raised doubts about the prospects of the new government. The new government also came in the wake of India’s growing political problems: weakness of the major centrist parties in terms of organisation, discipline, and programs; there was rampant politicisation of the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and even the armed forces; instances of caste, class, religious and ethnic conflict were on increase; and use of force and violence in politics became common.

In its early actions, the new leadership sought to build on the minimal consensus that can be found among its diverse supporters. An important example of this was the partial freeing of television and
radio from direct government control by establishing them as autonomous public corporations. The elections in several states in the early 1990 further confirmed the popularity of non-Congress parties, especially the BJP, and thus generally strengthened the government vis-à-vis the Congress. The budget for 1990-91 definitely reflected the capacity of the government and its supporters to work together on important issues. Against these positive tendencies, a number of destabilising factors were at work. The BJP and CPI(M) were finding it difficult to publicly agree on major and pressing policy issues as how to deal with the political conflicts involving religious divisions, such as the conflicts in Kashmir and Punjab; it became also difficult for the BJP, particularly to sit calmly by and support the Janata Dal while V.P. Singh used his stint in power primarily as a vehicle to improve his own and his party’s position of power.

It was only during the second BJP coalition government in the late 1990s that the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee could begin to ‘institutionalise’ coalition politics. Vajpayee seemed to have learnt the art as the coalition leadership stabilised. India’s democracy benefited from bipolar politics – with BJP and the Congress as the main parties, and regional parties aligning with either of them. India, therefore, remained a lively democracy in procedural terms, but this democracy, in terms of absorbing conflict and of generating effective policies, continued to muddle through a low level of efficacy.

In fact, Indira Gandhi’s long rule of almost one and a half decade did not produce any significant qualitative change in economic and social fabric of Indian nation. Rather, she aggravated the situation by pitting Hindus against the Sikhs – a new dimension that was added during her regime. Her slogan of “Garibi Hatyao” (remove poverty) was more rhetoric than real. She did not pursue it through effective policy and political framework. Indira Gandhi’s leadership impact was felt more in the sphere of international politics of South Asia. Her determination to support the cause of Bangladesh to the extent of going for a war against Pakistan boosted her status in South Asia and beyond.

Indira Gandhi had a strong leadership, but less democratic and sharing. In fact, during her regime there had been serious erosions of democratic institutions, The Congress lost its power and became an instrument of her personal consolidation of power and authority.
Most other leaders of India could not rise above the usual power play of the politicians. They were unable to keep durable imprint on India’s economic development process or social transformations. The dynastic rule of Nehru family for more than two and half decades had a negative impact on the growth of effective democratic leadership in India. The democratic institutions like the parties and the parliaments could not flourish and develop leadership at different levels under the strong hereditary leaders at the national level. There were many capable leaders in Indian political landscape, but they failed to come at the center stage to assume leadership positions. Some political leaders emerged like Jayaparakash Narayan and Morarji Desai, but they were older generation of politicians cast in the mould of Gandhi, more traditional-charismatic than democratic-effective leaders in a new generation of India.

Leaders like V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, or more capable I.K. Gujral could come as Prime Ministers representing non-Congress leadership. But their weak coalition-base did not allow them to prove their worth. It is only Atal Behari Vajpayee with strong organisational leadership survived the coalition-based politics. But, then it is doubtful, in view of his ‘misplaced’ ideological orientation (i.e., religious) whether he could perform and deliver the necessary economic and social transformations needed by India in the new century.

Pakistan has been facing the problems of democratic transitions and leadership crises since the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by a military leader. The civil-military leadership conflict in Pakistan has been an endemic feature in Pakistani politics and is recurring in cyclical pattern during most of its existence as nation. The end of 1980s ushered hopes in democratisation and economic development in Pakistan with the leadership of Benazir Bhutto who came in the wake of sympathy of his martyred father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. But she could not prove her leadership in the face of stiff opposition by opposition parties and leaders who joined hands with the military. The performances of Benazir had been dismal in economic field, and her regime became embroiled in ethnic conflict between the Mohajir community and the Sindhis in Karachi. Corruption, mismanagement and abuses of power eroded the legitimacy of her government to the point of being subjected to removal by the President who apparently sided with the opposition.
Nawaz Sharif, who succeeded Benazir as Prime Minister, began his career with the military and, ironically, ended with the military. The wealthy businessman of Punjab rose to politics under the tutelage of the then military dictator General Ziaul Huq. Sharif’s first induction to politics as finance minister in Punjab and subsequently as its chief minister in the late 1980s paved the way for his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1990. His term ended abruptly three years later in 1993 when the President used his constitutional authority to dismiss the government. He returned to power again in 1997 with a two-third majority to become the Prime Minister again. The people gave him a landslide victory to clean up corruption and rebuild a shattered economy. On the contrary, Sharif turned his attention to consolidate his power. Within two years, he came in open conflict with the President and relegated him to a figurehead. He forced the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to resign after an open display of hostility towards the Court. He forced the then army chief General Jehangir Keramat to leave his post. In fact, he had been engaged in hostility with almost every major institution of the country. He was thrown out of power by the army headed by General Musharraf on 12 October 1999.

The quality of political leadership is a crucial factor in the evolution of a democratic system in South Asia. Pakistan has been continuously failing in it, India is coming to terms with it, and Bangladesh is yet to develop it. Examples abound in East Asian countries including Malaysia, Singapore when leadership with vision has made far-reaching impact on the patterns of economic and social changes in their nations. In South Asian countries, this did not happen despite the fact that people had a strong attachment with leaders. In Bangladesh, political leadership has an added significance as it evolved through the struggle for independence of the country and people’s movements for democracy. Ironically, the failure of leadership in Bangladesh has also been most conspicuous. The performance of political leadership fell far short of people’s expectations of economic welfare and social peace.

Political leadership, therefore, plays the most crucial role in making democracy work, and how democracy can act as an effective structural mechanism to resolve conflicts. As democracy spreads around the world, there is a growing realisation that a nations’ political future, its economic strength, its national vitality, and its identity is being shaped by the leaders who can create a better, more
transparent and responsive government in partnership with a vibrant civil society. We may now have entered another phase of democratic theory when structural features of societies, cultural constraints or economic variables are less important for democratisation than the politicians or political leaders who seek public office and in whom the people can repose trust. But for long, the theorists of democracy gave too much importance to economic issues in organising politics.

Our discussions reveal that democratisation in South and Southeast Asian countries has usually taken the form of Prime Ministerial leadership. But the success of this type of leadership seemed to depend more on compromise, and where it did not occur – democratisation suffered instability. Indian case amply illustrates this point. The future democratic leaders of the regions, therefore, should be less exalted, but more flexible and tolerant of views and perspectives of others to negotiate and settle issues and differences. The constraints on prime ministers are often behavioural rather than constitutional, and therefore, more conspicuous in the public eyes. A prime minister who flouts behavioural constraints often is in danger of losing his position. A prime ministerial leadership is based on collegiality – he is the ‘team leader’ – first among the equals, he rules because his colleagues and even opponents allow him to rule. He has not the right to command; he has to gain it daily by his prestige and work over the rest of his ‘political class’. Thus the leader can, in some circumstances very strong and even control the political life but he may also be very weak, continuously in danger of losing his position. This characteristic of leadership has much relevance in most of the countries under our review. In India, even the strongest leader like Indira Gandhi lost her position when she had been behaving like the ‘supreme leader’ and not caring her colleagues in the cabinet and the party. In Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto lost her support in the party when she had been consolidating her personal position and authority at the expense of other colleagues.

The future democratic leadership, particularly in parliamentary system, therefore, needs to be developed on new behaviour patterns – the new leader will simply not make things happen by doing it himself or herself. The new leader will have to engage, mobilise, inspire, and team up with others to make things happen. The day of the lone-ranger is over. The hierarchical, position-based leadership is simply out of tune, particularly in a parliamentary system of governance. Indeed, our
review suggests that the democratic leadership is based on legitimacy and performance. Even when a leader is legitimate and strong, he can suddenly go or be displaced if his policies fail, if he loses touch with the people or suffers no confidence by colleagues in the government or the party. Prime Ministerial leadership, therefore, can only grow over time and requires patience and determination. Most of our cases suggest that prime ministerial leadership, except in Indian coalitional framework, gives rise to strong executive leadership. The prime minister serves not only as the head of the government, but also acts as the leader of the majority party in the parliament. He or she is also in most cases work as the head of the party. When this happens in a parliamentary system, where usually the president acts as the ‘titular’ head, too much concentration of power takes place in the hand of the prime minister, often resembling authoritarian executive. In future, the office of the president needs to be strengthened by allocating more power in it through constitutional process.

Our analysis also points to the fact that the era of long and charismatic leader is over as democratisation is taking hold gradually on most countries of South and Southeast Asia. There are some holdouts and aberrations, but the trend is inevitably towards more democratisation. In the past, society viewed leadership as a combination of charisma and special expertise. This worked well in traditional hierarchical societies. The democratic surge in the form of greater demand for equality and participation is leading to collapse of traditional values and institutions, and increased social mobilisation and demands. Long and charismatic leadership, is thus, disappearing. New democratic leadership, should, therefore, be encouraged, facilitated and developed on the basis of new goals, attitudes, behaviour and skill. The interests of the people should be the central focus in developing the new generation of democratic leaders. The democratic institutions and values are therefore very important in the process of promoting this type of leadership.

6.14 DEMOCRATISATION AND GLOBALISATION

Despite limitations, there has been a progressive trend in the consolidation of democratic processes and procedures throughout South Asia. It has been argued that the nature and prospects of democracy, particularly in South Asian states, are affected by globalisation in a number of distinctive ways. First, the locus of effective political power can no
longer be assumed to be national government - effective power is
shared and bartered by diverse forces and agencies at national, regional
and international levels. This can be easily discerned in South Asian
states in the formation of political parties, working of bureaucratic
institutions and in prioritising national resource allocations. Indeed,
the kind of accountability and control the citizens of South Asian states,
for example, exercise over democratic process and decision making
have been influenced by the international actors like the World Bank,
IMF, the multinational corporations and regional influential public
and private organisations which play an important role in sensitising
the people. As a result, the democratic leadership is increasingly
becoming responsive to the civil society and the people.

Second, the idea of a democratic order can no longer be defended
simply as an idea suitable to a particular closed political community or
nation-state. We are compelled to recognise that we live in a complex
interconnected world where the extensity, intensity and impact of
issues (economic, political and environmental) raise questions about
where those issues are most appropriately addressed. Deliberative and
decision making centers beyond national territories are appropriately
situated when those significantly affected by a public matter constitute
a cross-border or transnational grouping, when lower levels of
decision-making cannot manage and discharge satisfactorily
transnational or international policy questions and disputes, and when
the principle of democratic legitimacy can only be properly redeemed
in a transnational context.

6.15 CONCLUSION
Despite what famous political scientist Samuel P. Huntington termed
democratisation as a 'global revolution' at the end of the 20th century,
the struggle for democracy and human rights is far from won. Many
countries of the world are yet to democratise, and many democratising
countries are struggling to come to terms with past authoritarianism
and human rights abuses, particularly in conflict situations. Despite
globalisation's powerful impact on the nature of 'Westphalian' state
sovereignty, the nation-state still retains important autonomy. The
recent events have proved that human rights atrocities are not confined to
repressive governments and regimes; they continue to occur in many
developed democratic countries as well. Although all states have a
duty to enforce universal human rights as enunciated in the Vienna Declaration of UN World Conference and protection of human rights forms the core of democratic thought, the violations are pervasive and often call for international intervention. The idea of democratic order and protection of human rights, therefore, cannot be defended within the boundaries of the nation-state.

The South Asian countries are, therefore, facing serious problems of democratisation in terms of 'standard of governance' and human rights protection, as they fail to manage conflicts through dialogue and power sharing. This failure constitutes a serious challenge for these countries. In the early 21st century most of the South Asian nations face transition and consolidation of democratic governance and peaceful environment. The main argument in favour of democratisation for the 'Third Wave' countries is not historical but pragmatic. The Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen defended democracy for Asia in the 21st century on grounds of political liberty, political rights (including free speech and free media) for the open formation of values, and for the opportunity it provides to the people to draw attention of their needs to the rulers. Ironically, the record of most Asian states in human rights has been unsatisfactory. The political troubles arising from religious, ethnic and linguistic cleavages seriously affect the civil and political rights of people in Asian countries including India that is often regarded as the largest functioning democracy. In most South Asian countries, social inequality, organised crime, lack of confidence in police, corruption in public institutions and electoral arena, and poor leadership undermine the ethos of democracy.

The new leadership in the 21st century at the national levels in South Asia, therefore, needs new roles and new behaviours. Leadership has an added significance in their process of improving governance and social transformations. In the past, South Asian societies viewed leadership as a combination of charisma and special qualities to lead people and nations. Today, we need a different breed of leadership – less exalted but more effective, and engaging, mobilising, inspiring and be able to team with others to manage and resolve conflict. Transition to democracy in itself cannot bring these changes; national political leadership in the countries of South Asia must commit to a new democratic politics – increasingly focusing on people, building trust and sharing resources in a peaceful social order.
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