Unlike in the more advanced western world where the sense of a political community is well-developed, concepts of nation and state have intermeshed, and where the citizens of a state enjoy certain political rights and economic benefits, the issue of security in the developing countries can not be understood solely in terms of power relations between states, and even more specifically in terms of military defence against external threats. For the countries in the developing world, security is far more complex, and a function of many inter-related factors—social and economic, the conflict of nation and state, the vulnerability and penetrability of political structures and economic systems, perceptions of self and others, and the position within international relations of power. Security for the developing countries; therefore, should be defined in social and economic terms as well, and should include several “national values” which include, among other things, safeguarding of the political and territorial survival of the state, ensuring the organic (physical and collective) survival of the population, establishing the conditions for economic welfare and achieving and preserving harmony among diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious and racial groups within the state.

Within the framework of the above definition of security in developing countries, threats to the security of a state or a region within this category emanate essentially from three different but interrelated areas: domestic political conflict and instability resulting from the lack of consensus and societal cohesion on the basic goals and directions of the state, interstate animosity and collision, superpower confrontation
and intervention, direct or indirect. All three levels have their own independent dynamic, yet there is a connecting link between them, for in a number of cases domestic conflict in one state spills into neighbouring states disturbing the inter-state equation in a manner that attracts superpower interest in a regional balance of power. Conversely, domestic conflicts and instability can be stimulated, intensified, and complicated by the inter-state equations and great power competition.

Nowhere else are these complex linkages more prominent than in South Asia where the ethnic, religious and linguistic overlap has affected not only internal political developments in each regional state, but also inter-state interactions in a profound manner. The asymmetrical character of the region with India towering over the other six states is a source of both stability and tension. This is further complicated by the fact that while other South Asian states do not have common border with each other, India alone is every one’s neighbour. All seven South Asian states have always agreed on one thing that mutual distrust is the bane of their mutual relations. This situation, in turn, has brought the involvement of extra-regional powers in South Asian conflicts as a function of the structure of great power rivalry and competition thus further aggravating and complicating the intraregional relations. Regional Security is vulnerable to threats, tensions and conflicts originating from both endogenous and exogenous sources. Any analysis of South Asian regional security issues must, therefore, be approached from the three levels identified above, i.e., domestic, regional and global.

Of the three, the security dynamic at the domestic level has, of late, assumed much greater importance throughout the Third World. This is because most states in the Third World are still confronted with the problems of integrating the diverse groups of citizens under one political authority through the creation of viable and stable state structures, as well as with social and economic well-being. Moreover, domestic systemic challenges often take the form of violence which not only affects the political and societal stability (and thereby erodes the authority of the state), but also disrupts the pattern of regional security. One of the world’s most
South Asia's Security

enduring institutions, the modern nation state, is facing a major challenge in the last decade of the twentieth century. Pulled from above and torn from below, the nation state is going through a period of stress and strain that may not only alter the political map of the world, but also transform the nations of sovereignty and nationhood. States are being pressed in different unpredictable and politically violent ways by ethnic, religious or political groups seeking self-determination in the form of autonomous rights within existing ones, their separate countries, or reunification with homeland across their borders. The results are visible not just in the turmoil in most Third World states, in the collapse of Soviet Union and its satellite states, but in seemingly more stable and established nations. The future of Canada is in question because of conflicts between the English-speaking majority and the French minority in Quebeck.

The Crisis in South Asia

South Asia itself is in the midst of a major crisis in state and nation building. Ethnic separatism has not only increased region-wide, it is particularly active in Sri Lanka in the form of a demand for Tamil Eelam, and along the thousand mile border between India and Pakistan. From South to North, Sind, Indian Punjab, and Kashmir are all home to groups that have moved beyond federalism to separatism. Sectarian, religious and ethnic violence has gripped the politics of India and Pakistan, whose survival as nation states is being questioned, not only by the proponents of doomsday, but even by the most incorrigible optimists. In fact, the threat to the security of the two states today is posed more by internal upheaval and turmoil than by any external power. Bangladesh is better placed than either India or Pakistan in respect of consolidating itself into and internally coherent nation, for whatever marginal angularities existed in that country have been ‘sorted out’ and those who resist, like the Chakmas, would probably have to face a final solution. She, however, faces other more formidable problems of creating a viable and stable democratic structures in a country where the political party system is not only fragmented and corrupt, but also lacks experience in constructive politics.

While the crisis of statehood in some form or another
afflicts virtually all the countries of South Asia, for the sake of convenience and brevity, I shall concentrate my analysis more on the Indian situation, but some of the generalizations are valid for other countries of the region also. In India the angularities of caste, religion, language and ethnicity are posing formidable problems in the way of consolidation of the various peoples of India without their other identities being subsumed. Communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims is alarmingly on the rise; violent secessionist movements have practically paralyzed three states, Punjab, Assam and Kashmir; cast warfare threatens to erupt around the country. Fragmentation has set in almost all spheres of life, eroding the very vitals that provided the stability and internal strength to the country. As Rajni Kothari, India's leading political scientist has written: "... the whole ideology of pluralist democracy, which had been built around the essentially plural tradition of Hindu civilization itself has come under shadow and the unique brand of secularism as the ideological basis for the Indian state has been jeopardized". Communalism, which was earlier mostly limited to the fundamental fringe, has now spread to the mainstream political process in the country, creating a sense of alienation among the religious minorities who, out of frustration and despair, are becoming more communal and are increasingly rejecting the state through terrorism, violent outbursts, and calls for secession, as in the case of Punjabi and Kashmir. Secularism is being loudly challenged at the grass-roots level across the country. Growing communalism and sepearatism have naturally affected inter-state relations in the region, militarized the subcontinent and made its polity and economy vulnerable to external manipulation.

Against this background of political and social turmoil, will the Indian state and nation survive and still be able to guarantee the integrity of the country and provide security to its citizens? Will it be able to show its flexibility and resilience in facing current challenges as it has done on many occasions in the past since independence, or will it succumb to the forces of disintegration? Can the vitals of the Indian state and nation still be salvaged through reform and renewal of leadership and policies, or does the state structure itself need
redefinition? To pose the question in more theoretical terms: Is political and social disorder peculiar to the Third World states who are unique in their attempt at state and nation-building, or is it inherent in the process itself and something experienced by the developed states as well in their formative phase?

The answers to these questions can be found in an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian state in its basic task of social and economic transformation as it facilitates the process of integration of diverse groups and communities under one common political authority, sustained by the acquiescence of its citizenry. In this paper constraints of space do not permit us to deal specifically with this fundamental issue in great detail, but a few short remarks are essential in order to highlight certain structural problems of nation and state building, particularly in the ex-colonial countries of which India is one. State and nation building are a complex, long drawn process requiring policies and strategies in which the people at large need to be involved, and in which self-reliance and national autonomy vis-a-vis the external world are important factors for successful social mobilization. The nation-state itself is often a contradictory term. States are legalistic, governmental entities that wield power; nations are vaguer: "an imagined community" to quote Ben Anderson, groups of substantial numbers of people who share a culture, history, language, religion, or all four. Some countries - the United States, Canada, Sri Lanka - are not unitary nations at all but multinational states. And some nations - Kurd, Palestinians, Armenians - have no state. Japan is one case where the two concepts come neatly together. India is a multilingual, multi-religious, multiethnic, and multi-cultural country, and has a long way to go before its diverse groups based on caste or religious and ethnic identities are transformed into an integrated nation.

While commenting on the defects in the nature of state and nation building in the Third World states, one should not forget that the process in Europe, home of modern nation state, took centuries and followed a gradualist approach before achieving today's system. Even so, imperfections remain for Britain today with its unruly mixture of Scots,
Welsh and English; and its twilight war zone in Northern Ireland is decidedly not a prefect nation-state. For the newly independent countries, it is not time alone that puts a constraint on their journey to nationhood, because even the oldest ones began their journey only about forty-five years back. They have to tackle the political, social and economic dimensions of the decolonization process simultaneously, rather than through sequences and stages as was the case with the western developed states. The western nation-states were given a chance to solve some of the worst problems state-building before they had to face the ordeal of mass politics. This makes the problem of nation and state a more difficult and complicated task in the Third World. "This drastic shortening of the time frame and the telescoping of the various phases of state making, combined with the initially low level of state power from which state making take place", writes Ayoob," provide the primary explanation for the sharp internal challenges to the centralizing state structures in the developing countries and for the high level of violence endemic in the current phase of state making in the Third World".

The revolution in communications has shrunk the world and, by demonstrating the fruits of development in the west, has caused rising expectations in peoples of the newly-independent countries, making it imperative for their elites to catch up with the West and the developed world. Having neither the social and political cohesion of the West that was built over centuries of experimentation, nor the resources and technologies of the West, Third-World countries are often faced with a situation in which the competition for scarce resources among diverse groups within the society leads to conflicts, which the governing elite finds difficult to mediate. Consequently, the political elite itself gets entangled in the pursuance of narrow self-interest and short-term gains in both economic and social terrains, fuelling discontent and turmoil, and in the process contributes to the erosion of its own legitimacy. In the last three decades ethnic and sectarian political activity has been triggered also by the differential impact of modernization on ethnic, religious and linguistic groups and by a decline in respect for the state. The latter has
emboldened the ethnic movements to challenge the state's legitimacy. Therefore, modernization, rather than resulting in a new form of integration, increases ethnic group interactions that may heighten conflicts. While conflicts and turmoil are inherent in the very process of state and nation building, they need not undermine the authority of the state and nation. What is important is that the governing elite in developing states must be responsive to the demands and aspirations of their diverse constituent groups and work to build mechanisms to mediate and reduce conflicts to manageable proportions. To earn the legitimacy from the people the states in the Third World and their governing elites must fulfil the role of social engineering and should have the will to take a "whole range of initiatives from ameliorative measures vis-a-vis the poor to transformative strategies vis-a-vis the structure of society."

Sub-National Grievances

Having stated these perhaps apparent but important points, we shall examine a few of the important problems facing the Indian state today that have a bearing on security, not only from within but also from without. Before we go into the more intractable problems that face the country today—Kashmir, Punjab and Assam—we would like to put the political and social changes in the country within certain perspectives. One need not tread the familiar, infuriating, immobile face of India; instead one can paint a fresh image that captures the human spirit and dramatic change that should serve as a new starting point for thinking about the country.

Arguably, what is happening in India is that the individual freedom which came into force in 1947 with the extension of the universal adult franchise has begun to take hold in daily life, to break down the layer upon layer of distress and cruelty. The result is messy, since those liberties give rise to what the Trinidad-born writer of Indian descent, V.S. Naipaul, characterizes as a "million little mutinies", the colliding trajectories of countrymen shaking off the old mindsets of caste and class. This turmoil marks the road to progress. As democracy took roots, the demand for linguistic states naturally came up, an extension of the democratic
process beyond the monopoly of the elite. Economic develop-
ment, on its part, has strengthened regional consciousness - of
the wealth potential of one's native region, of the limited
employment opportunities giving rise to a peculiar brand of
parochialism as expressed in the clamour for jobs to be
reserved exclusively for the so-called "sons of the soil", running
counter to the compulsions of modern economic
development. This is what has actually happened in the case
of Assam and Punjab, and to a lesser extent in Kashmir,
where the roots of the problem extend to the partition of the
subcontinent, growing Hindu-Moslem tension, India-Pakistan
rivalry and the mismanagement of the state and economy by
the central government in Delhi.

The roots of the problem in Assam lie in what M.N.
Srinivas, the distinguished Indian Sociologist, call "runaway
ethnicity" added by the continuous immi-gration of outside
groups which is percieved to threaten to swamp -- numerically
and culturally -- the indegenes. The Assamese do not want
the "foreigners", Bangladeshis who migrated to Assam during
and since the 1971 Bangladesh war-to become citizens. Native
Assamese fear that the immigrants, along with the Bengalis
(both Hindus and Moslems), who settled in Assam earlier, are
altering the ethnic if not the religious composition of the
state. The Assamese have therefore demanded the revision of
the state's electoral roles on the basis of 1967 records so that
they are not swamped by powerful outside influences -
meaning obviously Bengali influences. The Assamese also
believe that the resources of their state which include oil, tea
and forest products, are being exploited by the outsiders.
Nevertheless, these resources have brought the state wealth.
Assam has a rich history of music and culture, and a society
where education is held at a premium, but it has not obtained
commensurate political power. The anti-foreigners agitation
led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and later Chief
Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, was nothing but a
manifestation of this feeling of lack of political clout vis-a-vis
other more powerful states in the Indian union. While the
AASU was leading the anti-foreigners agitation, all the while
another more radical organization took shape - United
Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which held its first,
meeting as far back as 1979 at the Rang Mahal in Sibsagar district and which had set its objective an independent state of Assam (Swadhin Assom) on the basis of a proclaimed distinct identity as Ahom. To attain its strategic objective of Swadhin Assom, the ULFA over the last three or four years has taken resort to extreme forms of violence, extortion of money, kidnappings and many other cruel acts to spread fear among those who do not agree with their demands.

ULFA’s social base extends not only at the rural level where the organization does have very substantial support, overwhelmingly even if not solely inhabited by the Assamese-speaking peasantry, the very category that sustained the anti-foreigners agitation, but also to the cities where it has been able to mobilize two broad and crucial categories, the students and elderly women. The organization has been able to pull off many daring ‘actions’ because of the strong network of shelter and support it has been able to build, consequent upon its well-publicised ‘constructive’ activities and rather more telling interventions as the custodian of the morals of the community in the countryside. This network, for long limited to identifiable areas, has been expanding. The local university also exerts a powerful intellectual impression. Professors, in the background of the ‘foreigners’ issue, articulated the hurt to Assamese psyche and economy from central ‘neglect’11. The broad middle classes, professionals, the bureaucracy, especially the state’s security apparatus - have all helped the organization to sustain its activities like liaison with the media, communications and propaganda. This support from the middle classes has come to ULFA despite a realization of the dangerous implications to themselves, if Swadhin Assom were ever to be realized, given the geographical, demographic and historical realities12. For, Assam’s geography can not sustain a full-blooded Naga-type insurgency. Compared to Mizoram or Arunachal Pradesh, it has well-developed interiors - three national highways, a good road network and a railroad. Unlike Punjab or Kashmir, it has no international borders. ULFA is said to have bases in Bangladesh and Burma, but according to one army official associated with the ‘Operations Rhino’13, this is more by default than by design. Another major weakness of ULFA is
that it is dependent upon the courtesies extended by the irregulars in Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in the matter of both training and arms purchases. Under the circumstances it would be rather impossible for ULFA to attain its strategic objective of Swadhin Asom even if the Assamese society were to be prepared to pay immense (and finally quite wasteful) costs. This truth however does not deter ULFA to continue with their struggle and urban terrorism, for their feeling towards the Indian state and the central authority in New Delhi are quite bitter, reason for which can be found in socio-economic factors including neglect, isolation, poverty and unemployment.

The Sikhs in Punjab feel similarly that in their own home state they are under-represented and the Hindus over-represented in most urban and modern occupations\textsuperscript{34}. The Sikhs also believe that they have been denied a proper Punjabi speaking state, as the Hindus of the region profess to be Hindi-speakers even when Punjabi is their real mother tongue. They demand Chandigarh as the exclusive capital of the Punjab, rather than as a centrally-controlled territory serving as the joint capital for Punjab and Haryana; they ask for a greater recognition of their language, Gurumukhi; they feel entitled to certain territories which are now in the possession of the states of Haryana and Rajasthan; a greater share of the waters of Ravi-Beas rivers; and finally, they demand greater powers for the state vis-a-vis the national government. The burden of other religious demands unmistakably point to a territorial and religious consolidation of the Sikh community with a view to developing it as a "Sikh nation".

Sikhs' demand for separate state can be traced to the pre-partition days from 1942 when the Cripps Mission began negotiations to reach a settlement about India's freedom. They demanded a seperate and independent state with the right to federate either with Hindusthan or Pakistan, when the Cabinet Mission came to India. The Akali Party kept reiterating this demand in the name of Sikhs and not in that of the Punjabis, and maintained this position till the partition of the country in 1947 which brought cataclysmic changes in the fortunes of the Sikhs. The separate electorate and special
privileges they enjoyed were abolished and the most prosperous Sikhs were uprooted. The community's separate identity had to be reasserted in a secular state in which they formed less than 2% of the population. After partition the change in the status of Hindus from a subdued minority to the majority community (about 65% of the total) in truncated Punjab (Sikhs rose from the third position to the second - about 33%) was said to have transformed their frustration "into and intensely aggressive communal consciousness". Though generally Punjabi-speaking, they opted for Hindi as their mother tongue supposedly at the instance of the RSS and Jan Sangh. The idea obviously was to overwhelm the Punjabi language and Sikh religion through Hindu-Hindi amalgamation. This perceived onslaught on their religion and language was the beginning of Sikh distrust of Hindus. The moderates within the Sikh leadership hoped to carve out a state where they could be assured a majority in which Khalsa tradition could be maintained and where they could also wield political power. This was the motivating force behind the Punjabi Suba movement. But behind these non-violent aspirations lurked a hard-core of separatists and extremists.

Even after the creation of the present Sikh-majority state of Punjab, Hindu-Hindi versus Sikh-Punjabi conflict did not diminish. The Sikh desire for the consolidation of Punjabi-speaking areas in neighbouring states reflect-in the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions (1978), has undoubtedly grown out of the fear of being swamped by the Hindu-Hindi combine. Behind all these lie a basic socio-economic conflict within the Punjabi society, i.e., a conflict between the agricultural and the commercial bourgeoisie. The Sikhs live predominantly in rural areas of Punjab, and have contributed greatly to the green revolution in that state, transforming the state into the most prosperous in India. But the prosperity is not well distributed, and agriculture has now reached a plateau, for the yield from the land can not grow exponentially. In fact, the prosperity derived from agricultural production started to gradually diminish from 1972-73. In 1973 the average profit from agriculture was 25.90%, but in 1979 it came down to 6.11%. The condition of the poor and middle class farmers gradually became desperate, while rich
farmers also suffered frustration. They were sore about it, and their wrath was directed against the "big traders and industrialists" who are generally Hindus, and who, as producers of the technological input of agriculture continued to make huge profits. When the prosperous Sikhs wanted to extend their economic activities to commercial and business sectors, they found themselves in hard competition with the Hindu entrepreneurs and traders dominant in the urban centers of Punjab. It is here that an essentially economic conflict assumes the character of communal conflict between the Sikhs and Hindus.

What is more, many educated Sikh youth with their self-image of being dynamic and virile race was not content with an agricultural profession and wanted jobs commensurate with their image which obviously were not available in a severely competitive urban centers of the state. The bitterness that grew out of it found expression in the fundamentalist and seperatist 'postulates' adopted at Anadpur Sahib. The class-caste conflict which underlines Punjab’s politico-communal strife deprived the Akalis the support of all Sikhs in the state17. The Akali Dal always and especially when out of power, harps on discrimination against Sikhs and non-recognition of their contribution to the country. The sense of injured pride and self-pity bred by such propaganda found its logical expression in seperatism and terrorism.

The rise of fundamentalism as spearheaded by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the high priest of Khalistan movement and Sikh terrorism, must again be understood as an attempt to preserve the seperate identity of the Khalasa Panth. The Sikhs have always combined religion with politics along with a tradition of authoritarianism sprinkled with an exaggerated belief in the martial qualities of their principal actors. Thus Bhindranwale, the obscurantist became a convenient charismatic rallying point for the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF), military extremists and cold-blooded terrorists. Interestingly, when Bhindranwale first launched his "dharam yudh", a religious crusade to protect and purify the Sikh faith, his center was the Golden Temple at Amritsar, but the movement did not attract significant
response from the Sikh community. It gained momentum with the fight over the control of Siromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the real source of Sikh power, an organization which controls a finance of approximately Rs. 250 crores and independent power in religious, social and cultural matters. The situation became overcharged when the frustrated Akali leaders also moved into the Golden Temple and coalesced their political and economic agitation with religious demands; a massive public response was generated under the rallying call "the Panth is in danger". Meanwhile proclaimed criminals and murderers from the Baba Khalsa when pursued by the police also sought refuge in the Golden Temple intensifying rivalry within the leadership of the terrorist group. The compulsions of internal rivalries between these factions saw the rise of competitive violence, the victims of which are both Hindus and Sikhs. The period since 1980 provides a gruesome record of terrorism in Punjab—murder, hijacking, arson, loot were a frequent occurrence. Hundreds of innocent victims were killed in cold-blood. The unholy nexus between the terrorists and the criminals, has virtually turned Punjab into a Hobbesian state. The storming of the Golden Temple to flush out the extremists, and the violence and the counter-violence that followed, have led to the alienation of large numbers of Sikhs from the Indian mainstream. The unrest in Punjab gets further complicated by the flow of arms and drugs from Pakistan. Punjab therefore, needs an economic package which enables her educated rural youth to engage in productive entrepreneur-ship in industry and in urban areas. Punjab's agriculture cannot contain this body of educated youth who need other outlets. At present out of frustration they take to guns and drugs.

The explosion of insurgency in Kashmir in the last three years has virtually paralyzed the state and exposed the growing vulnerability of the Indian state and nation. Kashmir, with its Muslim majority, lies symbolically at the heart of Indo-Pakistani antagonism, encapsulating the raison d'être of the two states - the Indian commitment to secularism against the Pakistani claim to be the guardian, if no longer the home, of the subcontinental Muslims. But the problem of
Kashmir is no longer restricted to India-Pakistan relations, and has assumed an independent character as a large section of Kashmiris, particularly in the Valley, given a choice would prefer to remain neither under India nor under Pakistan. In February 1948, Sheikh Abdullah, head of the National Conference, made a long and impassioned speech in the Security Council: "... the (Pakistani) raiders came to our land, massacred thousands of people - mostly Hindus, Sikhs but Muslims too - abducted thousands of girls ... looted our property and almost reached the gates of our summer capital, Srinagar ... . I had thought all along that the world had got rid of Hitlers... but from what is happening in my poor country, I am convinced they have transmigrated their souls into Pakistan." Much water have flown down the Jhelum since then to change the equations in Kashmir where its people are fighting no longer against the Pakistani intruders, but against the Indian security forces. In a place known for its quietistic, syncretistic Islam, militant Islamic fundamentalism has acquired a deep foothold, and where the fire of nationalism, ethnicity and religion is destroying the political and economic life of the state.

Three reasons are normally given for Kashmir's continued problem: the two religious nationalisms -- one claiming Kashmir, the other suspicious of Kashmir; the corrupt and inefficient successive Kashmiri governments, including Farooq Abdullah's (1987-January 1990) causing political instability and economic stagnation; and the centralizing tendencies of Indian politics that would unfairly sometimes cruelly equate Kashmir's just desire for autonomy with secession. Kashmiri nationalism, however, suffered from certain inherent contradictions. Having rejected Pakistan despite its religious affinity, and opting to stay with India on grounds of secularism, Kasmiri leaders like Sheikh Abdullah identified Kashmiri nationalism with Indian nationalism as a sub-set of the latter. Within such a framework of Kasmiri nationalism, state-level autonomy within the Indian federation should have satisfied Kashmiri aspirations. But then, Sheikh Abdullah at one breath supported Kashmir's accession to India and even recognized the link between Kashmir remaining within India and India's secularism, on
another breath he aimed at independence of the state, even with the help of the British and the Americans\textsuperscript{21}. One explanation for Sheikh Abdullah's vacillation is that he was apprehensive of the future of Kashmir within India in the event of Hindu nationalism emerging triumphant in the struggle for power in New Delhi. At the same time, Kashmir's continued accession was essential for the survival of secularism in India. "Precisely to fight Hindu nationalism," comments an analyst, "secularists like Nehru in Delhi needed Abdullah's unqualified support. Abdullah was not sure of the longevity of secularism; his unequivocal faith was, however, required for imparting longevity to secularism"\textsuperscript{22}. Kashmir has still not emerged from the shadow of this crippling paradox, complicating the normal evolution of the state. The second inconsistency in Kashmiri nationalism is even more serious. The state of Jammu and Kashmir consists of three ethnically separate geographical regions - a Dogra Hindu-majority Jammu, a Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley and a Tibetan Buddhist-majority Ladakh. If Kashmir nationalism is not based on religion but on Kashmiriyat, a separate Kashmiri ethnicity, then ethnically three distinct groups in the state emerge, i.e., Buddhist Tibetans in Ladakh, Hindu Dogras in Jammu and the Muslim Punjabis in Jammu. Any ethnic nation of independent Kashmir can not carry the entire state without being internally inconsistent, particularly if non-Kashmiri groups do not wish to join such a state.

An interesting aspect of the movement for independence in Kashmir is that it is not only directed at the Indian State in terms of secession but also at the established ruling groups within Kashmir. "Its social origins are neo-bourgeois and its philosophy a combination of 'Kashmiriyet' and Islam. Depending upon the weight given to each of these two elements respectively, we have the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and the Hizbul Mujhaideen, the two main militant groups\textsuperscript{23}. The current crisis is the culmination of years of perverse democratic politics within the state, compounded by rampant corruption and sluggish socio-economic development. All this fanned political disenchantment, especially among the growing numbers of educated unemployed Kashmiri youth. Also the sense of alienation
among the Kashmiri emergent middle class from the Indian state is due in part to a feeling of discrimination by New Delhi. Rightly or wrongly, this feeling is deeply embedded in the Kashmiri psyche. Apart from the political manipulations, even on the economic front, there has been a feeling of being let down and not being treated equally or with the same trust as is shown to other states, “The winds of fundamentalism and the stories of ‘heroic terrorism’ across the world provided the inspiration for them to adopt militancy,” comments an analyst. These feelings within Kashmir obviously provide fertile ground for Pakistan to play out its own game plan. Pakistan has not only been providing arms and training to Kashmiri militants, but also has reportedly based Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) “controllers” in the vale and is directing their operations on a day-to-day basis.

Given the past history of the subcontinent, further division of or granting of independence to any of the constituent units of today’s India will not solve any religious, linguistic, or other ethnic disputes. The same is true for Pakistan. The case of Bangladesh was very different because the two former wings of Pakistan were not only physically separated by another country, they had hardly anything in common except for religion. There is no doubt that long years of neglect, indifference, and wrong policies, though not deliberate, has led to the alienation of large number of Kashmiris: it will be a difficult task of statesmanship to bring them back into the mainstream. Every effort should be made to meet their just grievances expeditiously. Both the central government in Delhi and the Kashmiri militants must realize that a final solution to the problem can not come out of the barrel of a gun. It can come only through a mutual understanding of shared interests. From New Delhi’s side there should begin a serious effort not only to give the Kashmiris a free hand to pursue democratic processes within the valley, but also grant genuine autonomy to run their own affairs. Once that is done, the Kashmiris will automatically develop a strong sense of commitment to the integrity of the Indian Union, for the majority of Kashmiris know well that the quality of life on the other side of the border is in no way better, and most likely is worse. If the process of greater
autonomy and decentralization is to be effective and peaceful, the minorities' right of self-determination will have to stay short of secession. Both India and Pakistan must also realize that their security is in no way enhanced by supporting, encouraging, and taking advantage of the other's internal problems. Problems like Sind or Kashmir can be tackled better if India and Pakistan develop mutual trust and respect for each other, and a common interest in solving these problems.

The developments in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir represent the growing interface between the internal and external security of the Indian state, for all the these have sensitive borders with neighbours who often have taken advantage of India's internal problems. The secessionist challenges emanating from the periphery have far more ominous dimension than even before. Unquestionably such systemic challenges of the state are products of poor governance and inept domestic political management. Added to that is the cross-border linkages and the flow of arms across the western border, the Palk straits and through the dense jungles along the Indo-Burmes border. How can India face this twin challenge of internal and external security emanating from the crisis of state and nation building?

I shall argue here that for the safety and security of the people of the South Asian region, there is no alternative to the existing international borders and the present state structures. As for India, the union is not in imminent danger of disintegration like the Soviet Union; nor, indeed, of erupting into civil war like Yugoslavia. Far from being just glued together by a colonial administration, India is heir to a historical legacy whose strength and resilience are not to be underestimated. At the same time, however, incipient signs of similar problems are not to be missed, and the Soviet example is not without some relevance to centre-state relations in India. To quote the editor of Statesman, a leading national daily: "Even if the evidence of pitched battles between the armed police of Assam and Nagaland, or of the political warfare and legal sleight of hand over the Cauvery water, do not recall strife in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, there may be a lesson in the knowledge that Yugoslavia held together best
when central authority derived its legitimacy from a national leader of unquestioned stature. That was one of several attributes that Marshal Tito shared with Jawaharlal Nehru. Therefore, what is needed is not the fragmentation of states, but decentralization and devolution of power to the constituent units; a better record of communication on the part of the state with its sectarian and ethnic minorities; and compassion in the form of cultural tolerance and fairness in constitutional safeguards for the disadvantaged. A careful scrutiny of the roots of unrest in South Asia will reveal that many of the urgent issues confronting the whole region center around the tension caused by either a central government or a particular dominant ethnic, linguistic or religious group arrogating to itself too much power. Where India and the Soviet Union most clearly resembled each other was in the concentration of power in the Central government. In the case of India, central authority is exercised through a whole network of devices ranging from the allocation of resources and the clearance of the development budget, to the posting of paramilitary forces and the utilization of the office of Governor to destabilize state government that are not to the liking of New Delhi. The concentration of power by the Centre was achieved through backdoor means that bypassed or violated the provisions of the Constitution. The authority that was vested in institutions like the Planning Commission that were set up by executive order. Manipulation of financial and licensing powers as well as of the Concurrent List, constant expansion and use of the paramilitary forces, and of course, political control and the absence of any democratic balance within the Congress helped to shift decision-making authority from state capital to New Delhi. The progression has been more and more towards tight centralization.

As the dominance of the Congress party faded, and along with that decline a deterioration of the quality of its leadership and vision, institutionally anchored and accountable model of politics was replaced by an increasingly personalized, centralized and corrupt brand of politicking. Assam, Punjab and Kashmir are symptoms of this disease. Basically, in each of these cases, the problem arose due to the concentration of power in the hands of the central government
and the lack of internal autonomy on the part of these states. Arguably, much of the discontent and frustration can be assuaged if these states are permitted to exercise a greater degree of autonomy in running their affairs. India has paid a price for over-centralization of development planning and administration. Its large and rigid bureaucracy has a self-interest in perpetuating the status quo. A strong central government and an umbrella organization like the Congress party were essential, in the early years of Indian independence, to keep the country together after the cataclysmic partition of India. The objective situation has changed now, calling for a reform in the federal structure of the Indian Republic. Unlike some of the Soviet republics, not many Indian states nurse memories of a sovereign existence, but they do harbour economic and other grievances that cut across party lines, the demand by the coal-producing states of West Bengal and Bihar to levy cess being an example. The old Congress has disappeared, and in its wall has emerged regional political parties. In this changed context, the states should assume more and more powers to run their affairs, and the central government should have only those powers that are necessary for the defence of the country and the conduct of international relations, as well as those necessary for the maintenance of an all-India character of the state. What is needed is a thorough restructuring of centre-state relations with greater autonomy given to the states. With the safety valve of the multiparty democracy that the Indian political system possesses and the flexibility the system demonstrated in the past in absorbing conflicting interests and meeting challenges to its integrity, a restructuring of centre-state relations within the spirit of the Indian Constitution will surely bring a willing partnership of our constituent units, and help the Indian state and nation to tide over the systemic crisis that it is confronting now. The long term solution to the problem of unity that India is facing today ultimately lies in the reassertion of the democratic spirit that is the pride of the Indian system.

Regional Social and Economic Transformations

It is not India alone, but South Asia as a whole that must undergo radical changes in its political, social, and especially,
economic orders. Whereas vast economic changes are taking place in the neighbouring ASEAN (Association for South East Asian Nations) and Pacific region, raising the standard of living and the quality of life for people through the spread of literacy and poverty-alleviation measures, South Asia - despite its sheer size, population and educated and scientific manpower, and resource potential - continues to lag far behind the former regions in all economic indicators. While the overall incidence of poverty is diminishing in most of South Asia, the absolute number of poor continues to grow, alarmingly widening the gap between the rich and the poor, and the gap between the needs of an impoverished yet burgeoning population and the capacity of the country's shrinking land resources and life-support systems to meet them. Such explosive disparities in the social fabric often lead to the formation of critical masses of discontent and are always fertile ground for political and social unrest that may erode the security of a society and state. There is a limit beyond which the existence of mass poverty and destitution in the country will make it ungovernable and virtually destroy it. And this limit is about to be reached for most countries of South Asia. The development and growth registered in these countries is offset by a tremendous increase in population. According to the latest World Bank Report, India stood 20th from the bottom in 1989 in a list of 124 countries arranged in order of per capita GNP. However, if countries with population of less than 20 million are excluded from consideration, India emerges as the sixth poorest countries in the World. By the year 2000, India along will have over a billion inhabitants notwithstanding population control programmes. When that happens, it is likely that the number of people below the poverty will exceed 500 million, thus constituting at least 50 per cent of the population instead of the present 40 per cent or so. In the case of Bangladesh, already some neighbours see an inexorable demographic threat in its 114 million people, growing at a rate of 2.2% a year, occupying so tiny a portion of the globe. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh itself, there is occasional talk of lebensraum, "not in terms of state aggression but of the spillage of surplus population into India's Assam state, already troubled by
internal migration pressures, or into Burma’s relatively empty Arakan region which has historical and religious links to Bengal. It is entirely possible that our pauperized masses are not likely to take things lying down for all time, and may resort to more organized violence on an uncontrollable large scale. It is necessary, therefore, the nations of South Asia should adapt for itself a minimum agenda for survival for at least the next ten years. Such an agenda, must, apart from dealing effectively with the imminent threats to national security and integrity, accord high priority to the attainment of a zero rate of population growth within the shortest possible time, and to the conservation and optimum management of our life-support systems and natural resources. The number in South Asia who can not read and write remains quite large compared to the states of the ASEAN region, which have made great strides in the eradication of illiteracy in their respective societies. Percentage of literate adults as existed in 1985, according to FAO figures, were 91%, 87%, 82%, 81%, 75% and 70% for Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and China respectively, the rates were abysmal for India, Pakistan and Bangladesh which were 43%, 30% and 33% in the same period. Unlike ASEAN countries, none of the South Asian countries are major actors in the international financial scene, except as consumers of development assistance. An integrated development programme for the Ganges and Brahmaputra valleys is one of the crying needs of not only South Asia, but a world where food shortages and supplies in one region can affect the price of bread globally.

South Asia’s debt problems are not as serious as some of the Latin American or African countries, but it is growing worse, particularly after the Gulf war which has affected the economies of the region very badly. The wells of international aid are gradually drying up for South Asia as more interesting demands emerging from Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and perhaps China. Gone are the days when both the super powers used to court the Third World countries for the spread of their strategic influence. South Asia is also quite insignificant in international trade, and
populist forces in all the countries of the region oppose freemarket developments thus keeping the region's economy virtually insulated from the world economy. As the economic deprivation of ordinary men and women increases and basic law and order breaks down in all the countries of South Asia, tolerance of poor governance wears thin. In the post-Cold War era, it will be difficult for the governments of the Third World states to explain away domestic problems as arising from "external adversarial malevolence" and as a consequence of ideological rivalry for supremacy and spheres of influence. To gain acceptance of their people and their state as endowed with legitimacy, the regimes in these countries would have to improve the quality of governance and their capability to deliver goods to their people. A solution to much of the social and political challenges to the integrity of the state and nation in South Asia, therefore, lies in the vitalization of the economy of the region through the creation of a favourable climate for foreign investment to spur growth and development, opening their economies to international competition to improve the quality of their productive capacities to break the shackles of stagnation and under-development.
Notes and References


2. Seminar (Bombay), January 1991

3. Akbar Ahmed in an interesting essay throws light on certain problems about the post-colonial statehood, particularly in South Asia. Unlike in the Western democracies, political cleavages in post-colonial societies do not develop along ideological lines, but are essentially based on religion and ethnicity turning the political struggle in these societies as the tyranny of the majority community against the minority. To quote Ahmed: "The problem is the large, over whelming numbers of the majority group: Hindus in India, Punjabis in Pakistan, Bengalis in Bangladesh and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. For the majority, as long as they stay united along sectarian or ethnic lines, democracy could mean perpetual rule. And because the majority orders economic decisions, eternal monopolization of the national cake is guaranteed. For the minorities there is no escape from the logic of numbers. The increasing violence in their response is as much a sign of despair as evidence of this logic ... Over the decades their patience exhausted, they have one option to exercise: that of rejecting the state ... Against the power of a deaf Goliath it appears to be the only strategy open to David." Akbar S. Ahmed, "South Asia: Roots of Decline", Economic and Political Weekly, January 13, 1991, pp. 89-90.


6. The European experience, to quote Tilly; “cost tremendously in death suffering, loss of rights, and unwilling surrender of land, goods or labour . . . . The fundamental reason for the high cost of European state building was its beginning in the midst of a decentralized, largely peasant social structure. Building differentiated, autonomous, centralized organizations with effective control of territories entailed eliminating or subordinating thousands of semi-autonomous authorities . . . Most of the European population resisted each phase of the creation of strong states.” Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in Tilly (ed.) The Formation of National States in Western Europe (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1975) p. 71. quoted in Ayoob, n. 1

7. Ayoob, n.1. Ayoob in his review of Azar and Moon’s book quotes the emphasis they place on the “software” side of national security in the Third World which is an acknowledgement on their part that not enough time has been available to state making in these countries to develop the intangible ingredients of security, including the identification of the people with the state (legitimacy) and of people with each other (integration). It is also an acknowledgement of the fact that in the absence of these intangibles the state elites in the Third World are bound to take recourse to the “hardware” instruments of security, namely military force, to meet what are essentially political challenges from disaffected groups within their populations.


9. V.S.Naipaul, India: A Million Mutinies Now (Heinemann, London, 1990) This new book of Naipaul is quite different from its predecessors, An Area of Darkness (1964) and India: A Wounded Civilization (1977) - both of which won acclaim in the West and offended many Indians. If in 1962 Naipaul’s travel “exercised nothing”of his childhood fear of India as a trapdoor into the abyss, his latest Indian tour (over 14 months to February 1990) succeeded in “shedding my Indian nerves, abolishing the darkness that separated me from my ancestral past.” Instead of abjectness, defeat and shame, he could now see India restored to itself after centuries of foreign invasions. In the 90 years of the Raj after the Mutiny, the 40 years of independence, “the idea of freedom has gone everywhere in India.” If independence had been worked for at the top, the idea of freedom was working its way down in a way not apparent in 1962. “The liberation of spirit that has come to India could not come as release alone. In India, with its layer below layer of distress and cruelty, it had to come as a
disturbance. It had to come as rage and revolt. India was now a country of a million little mutinies." Behind sectarian, religious, regional excess was a central will, a central intellect, national idea. "The Indian union was greater than the sum of its parts, many of these movements strengthened the Indian state, defining it as the source of law and civility and reasonableness."


11. For an exposition of this theme, see, Jyotirindra Das Gupta, "Ethnicity, Democracy and Development in India: Assam in a General Perspective", in Atul Kohli, n. 4. pp. 144-68. Das Gupta argues that the development implication of the movement in Assam has been complicated by the fact that there has been no coherence in the agenda proposed by its leaders in recent years. "The leaders of the Assamese movement were less secure within the state as well as within their community than were their counterparts in the Tamil, Telugu, Marathi or Gujrati movements. They have failed to adhere to a consistent definition of what constitutes Assamese authenticity, and their targets have shifted from time to time. Worst of all, the movement was intensified at a turning point in Indian national politics when strategies of inclusive incorporation both at the center and at the party level were being drastically replaced by strategies of manipulation and exclusion . . . The insecurity of the movement and the lack of responsiveness at the center after 1980 cumulatively contributed to a desperation that claimed a massive human price."


16. Sikhs played a dynamic role in the Green revolution, in increasing food production by 300% within the span of 10 years (1965-66 to
1975-76) and contributed as much as 57% of the total procurement of wheat and rice at the national level during 1977-78. In 1978, Punjab’s per capita income was Rs. 1450/- while it was Rs. 580/- in the rest of the country. But prosperity is not well distributed. In the initial phase of the Green Revolution, high profits from agriculture resulted in a concentration of land-holdings and complete elimination of tenant-farmers and tenants-at-will. The agricultural census report of 1971 shows that 56.2% of the land-owning farmers cultivate 15.1% of the total cultivable land, and each owning two hectares or less, but only 5% of the land-owning farmers cultivate 26.9% of the total cultivable land, each owning ten hectares or more. As a consequence, the area under the occupancy tenants declined from 9.9% to 4.6% in 1957 and to zero by the 1960s. In 1961, 17% of the peasantry was landless; in 1971, the percentage rose to 32.1% and in 1981, to 38.6%. According to Punjab government statistics as many as 8.24 lakhs of farmers’ families constituting nearly 25% of the total population, live below the poverty line. About 80% of these belong to the scheduled castes.

17. Socio-economic differences within the Sikh community and their impact on Punjab’s electoral politics is very interesting. Within the Sikhs, Khatri, Aroras and Ramgarhias constitute the business community (about 10%) and are generally town-dwellers. Jat Sikhs (about 55%) mostly land-owning farmers and Majhabis (about 35%) who are scheduled castes, constitute the bulk of landless agricultural labourers. Said to be of Indo-scythian in stock, Jats are known “for their sturdy independence” and “patient vigorous labour”. The “big traders and capitalists and monopolists”, so despised and denounced in Anandpur Sahib resolutions are generally Hindus who have alternately shifted allegiance from the Jan Sangh to the Congress. The class antagonism of the rich Jat farmer against industrialists and traders has thus been further accentuated by communal fervour. While the Mahabis generally voted for the two communist parties, the Sikh business community generally kept on swinging between the Congress and the Akalis. Since 1966, however, Jat Sikhs have been steadfast in their allegiance to the Akali Dal. Thus the class-caste conflict has intensified Punjab’s politico-communal strife. See Paul Brass, n. 14.

18. See Brass, n. 14. The more Bhindranwale became the center of public and media attention and the more his actions and speeches placed in the role of defending the Panth against an unjust central government and its police, the less the so-called moderate Akalis could criticize him and the more, in fact, they had to come closer
to him in public perception. In the meantime, the moderate Akali leadership tried its best to maintain its leadership of the Sikh community by pressing the long-standing Akali demands in non-violent agitational movements. They wanted the centre to respond if it wished to preserve the long-standing, competitive and non-violent relationship between the Punjab Congress and the moderate Akali Dal by making maximal concessions. “Instead, the center chose procrastination and countered violence with violence.” The failure of the Akali Dal to weaken the intransigence of the central government, the failure of its movements to achieve any significant concessions, meant inevitably its own decreasing credibility and the increasing transfer of political initiative in the Sikh community to Bhindranwale.


22. Varshney refers to recently de-classified documents of the State Department of the United States to establish this point. “While in Kashmir, I had two secret discussions with Sheikh Abdullah ... at his request. He was vigorous in reinstating that in his opinion (Kashmir) should be independent; that overwhelming majority population desire this independence.” Loy Henderson, U.S. Ambassador to India, “Note to the U.S. Secretary of State”, dated September 29, 1950. See Varshney, n 20.

23. Ibid.

24. Seminarist, n. 19


27. Das Gupta’s insightful comment in this respect is worth quoting here: “Ethnic regionalism and secular nationalism, are not necessary competing values.... from the very early phase of Indian independence, the leaders of the central government have consistently underestimated the national concerns and aspirations of ethnic movements. It was easy for leaders at the center to doubt the national credentials of the ethnic movement from the secure heights of the central government. From the Andhra movement of the early fifties to the Assam movement in the eighties, however, ethnic
politics has demonstrated that regional movement can add depth to nationalism. When ethnic leaders are allowed to share power, they generally act according to the rules of the regime and quickly seek to build linkages with other regional leaders as well as with national leaders." (emphasis mine)

28. The operation of free market economies combined with fiscal discipline promoted free flow of aid between ASEAN region on the one hand, and United States, Japan and Europe on the other. As a result, in the last two decades, the ASEAN countries have recorded spectacular growth, surviving the two oil crises of the 1970s with less economic disruption than the industrialized West. The ASEAN countries recorded an annual growth rate between 6 to 11 per cent in the real GNP. The per capita income in the region also rose by few times.

29. B.B. Vohra, "Tackle poverty on a War Footing", Times of India (New Delhi), November 7, 91. In addition to the increasing number of people likely to go below the poverty line, the continued degradation of our land and forest resources, and, therefore, our water resources, threatens to cross the point of ecological no-return in the not too distant future. Two-thirds of the country's total land resources which possess any potential for biotic production are already degraded, one-third so severely that they are officially classified as waste-lands.