

ETHNICITY AND NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA: CASE  
STUDIES OF THE BALUCH MOVEMENT IN PAKISTAN AND THE  
KHALISTAN MOVEMENT IN INDIA

by

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person. Nor does it include material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of this thesis. I hereby also certify that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

*Rajshree Jetly*  
Rajshree Jetly

Date: 16 March 1999

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the process of nation-building in South Asia, with particular reference to the Baluch in Pakistan and the Sikhs in India. The two movements stand in stark contrast to one another. The Baluch, a closed tribal community with low levels of socio-economic development represent a small ethnic group in Pakistan; while the Sikhs, a small religious minority, are a robust people with high levels of socio-economic development in India. But both desired a separate homeland for themselves.

The thesis pursues two objectives. First, it analyses the factors responsible for the growth of separatist sentiments among the Baluch and the Sikhs, as well as the causes contributing to the decline of the respective movements. It explains these dynamics with the help of three variables: the nature of the movements, the policies of the Pakistani and Indian state, and the role of external powers. The period selected for the two case studies coincides with the rise, operation, and decay of the two movements. For the Baluch it ranges from 1971, the beginning of the civil war to 1981. In the case of Khalistan, it concentrates on the period from 1978 to 1992. Second, it examines the phenomenon of separatism in the larger context of state-building in South Asia, but more specifically India and Pakistan. It looks at the policies of both the Indian and Pakistani states in dealing with their ethnic minorities.

The study does not subscribe to any one theory to explain the rise of the Baluch and Khalistan movements. Instead it adopts a trans-

disciplinary approach using various schools of social anthropology and political science to understand separatism in the subcontinent.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity and ethnic conflicts have dominated much of the discourse in contemporary politics in recent years. The salience of ethnic conflict can be measured from the fact that there is hardly any part of the world that has not witnessed it in some form and magnitude. The importance of ethnicity as a force shaping human affairs is unquestionable. A ubiquitous and pervasive phenomenon, it has, as remarked by Donald Horowitz, fought and bled and burned its way into public and scholarly consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

Though not unique to South Asia, the assertion of separate identities remains the biggest challenge to the stability and integrity of states in the subcontinent. In fact it has been a critical variable in the formation and re-demarkation of boundaries in the region. Almost all the countries in the region face cleavages and conflicts along cultural and religious lines. They have also inherited asymmetrically developed social structures and political and economic institutions.

Efforts at nation-building have tended to create further imbalances within the polity, with federal governments in most states grappling with problems of integrating different groups. The clash between the ever-increasing clamour for nationhood and sovereignty on the one hand, and the notions of indivisible statehood on the other, have created a fundamental contradiction in contemporary times. There are

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) p. xi.

two major views on the contested concept of sovereignty. The first is a conceptualisation which emanates from a centralised state apparatus while the second view is that sovereignty resides in the social base of a nation, the essence of which is a psychological bond that joins people and differentiates them, in the subconscious conviction of their members, from all non-members in a most vital way.<sup>2</sup> The failure of the state to articulate a viable national identity and the simultaneous politicisation of ethnic identities have complicated the process further.

The main objectives of this thesis are two-fold. It examines the process of nation-building in the comparative context of South Asia, but more specifically India and Pakistan. Second, it looks at the Baluch and Khalistan movements, and studies the failure of the two in the larger context of the strategies of nation-building and governance in their respective countries. It does so by looking at the nature of the respective movements; the role of the state; and patterns of external involvement.

Most Third World state systems are legacies of colonial conquest and partition. According to Anthony Smith, the new states in Asia and Africa came under considerable pressure to create nations such as those that existed in Europe and America. Their commitment to nation-building implied that they created a national cultural and political identity that could differentiate them from their neighbours.<sup>3</sup> To this extent, most post-colonial Third World countries have embodied some aspects of the Western model of the nation-state in

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<sup>2</sup>Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism, The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) p. 112.

that they have all aspired to political unity and to the capability to prescribe rules of social behaviour.<sup>4</sup> A nation-state can be defined as one in which the state's boundaries coincide with the nation's and the total population of the state shares a uniform culture.

As with other Third World countries, the problems of national integration in South Asia need to be studied against the backdrop of partition and the process of nation-building since independence. Integration has been defined as

the degree of cohesion that binds members of social systems together and is generally thought of in terms of values, institutions and communications which facilitate escalating sequences of social contact, cooperation and consensus.<sup>5</sup>

Myron Weiner has delineated five aspects of integration including "the process of bringing culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity," the establishment of "national central authority over subordinate political units or regimes which may or may not coincide with distinct cultural or social groups," the achievement of a "minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order," by promoting common values through political socialization; and organization of society for some common purposes so that the leadership may carry

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<sup>4</sup>For a detailed discussion and a critique of the Western nation-state model see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments, Colonial and Post Colonial Histories* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993). Chatterjee argues that while in the outer material domain comprising the economy, state craft, science and technology the colonial state imitated the West, in the inner spiritual domain of national culture, the nation was already sovereign, even when the state was in the hands of the colonial power. See p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Donald G. Morrison and Hugh M. Stevenson, "Integration and Instability," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, September 1972, p. 903. Cited in Arthur G. Rubinoff, "Integration Theories and the Case of Goa," in Milton Israel (ed.), *National Unity, The South Asian Experience* (New Delhi: Promilla and Co. Publishers, 1983), p. 166.

out programmatic goals.<sup>6</sup> Integration fundamentally presupposes the transformation of separate units into "components of a coherent system."<sup>7</sup>

According to Myron Weiner, the scale and volume of conflict between social groups increases as societies modernize. As a result "traditional rivalries are aggravated and new conflicts are created as social relationships change."<sup>8</sup> Walker Connors is also of the view that such a process can lead to fragmentation, especially since modernisation makes the minorities more aware of the distinctions between themselves and others.<sup>9</sup> However, some like Jyotindra Das Gupta are of the opinion that while inter-group conflicts in segmented societies are initially conducted on a communal basis, such politics have eventually led to the creation of interest groups, political parties and other institutions which have penetrated the body politic promoting integration in the long run.<sup>10</sup>

This has created its own dilemmas for the ruling elite of many Third World countries as they seek to integrate into the international order as modern states. The multi-ethnic nature of the newly created states makes integration a particularly difficult task for the central government in Third World societies. Attempts to "invent" a new political culture out of myriad groups has provoked fierce opposition

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<sup>6</sup>Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, no. 358, March 1965, pp. 53-54.

<sup>7</sup>Karl W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1978), p. 198.

<sup>8</sup>Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development," *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup>Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism - The Quest for Understanding* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup>Jyotindra Das Gupta, *Language, Conflict and National Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

from minority ethnic groups, which have over the years become politically conscious entities. The state finds it difficult to contain, far less subdue, this form of ethnic nationalism giving rise to different forms of conflict. Under the circumstances, few states can claim to be nation-states.

In South Asia, each country has relied upon its own forms of nation-building, some more successfully than others. But the essential contradiction between the nature of the state and the multi-ethnic social system persists, in varying degrees.

In Pakistan, Islam has been used as a unifying force to bring different ethnic groups together in the absence of territorial integrity, a common language, and a sense of national community. In India, the central leadership attempted various strategies of nation-building in the 1950s and 1960s, which included the recognition of linguistic diversity, the secular nature of the Indian state, and special provisions for backward castes and minority communities. In Bangladesh, the constitution of 1972 was modelled on the principles of democracy, socialism, nationalism and secularism, with "Bengaliness" at the heart of the country's identity. The secular platform has since been dropped in favour of Muslim Bangladeshi nationalism as part of the nation-building project. Similarly, Sri Lanka has been drawing upon Sinhalese and Buddhist identities to define its concept of a nation-state. This trend became particularly strong when the Sri Lankan Freedom Party came into power in 1956. While some of these policies have been successful, others have exacerbated conflicts instead of resolving them.

In their acute form conflicts could become separtist or even secessionist. Inayatullah Baluch delineates six stages in the progression of an ethnic movement to becoming a secessionist one. It is, however, not essential for the movement to go through these stages in their natural order of progression. These stages are identified as: ethnic awareness; ethnic evaluation; demands for equality and justice in various spheres of life against real or perceived discrimination; demand for a separate province; bluff secesion to extract concessions without a serious determination to secede; and finally actual secession in which the ethnic group engages in a struggle for a separate state or its merger in a neighbouring political community in which it has members of its own ethnic community (irredentism).<sup>11</sup>

Secession can be defined as a "unilateral act for independence by a group comprising territory in a sovereign, independent state undertaken in opposition to the metropole".<sup>12</sup> International law does not recognise the right to secession. It recognises the right to self-determination of peoples, but in the context of the right of the populations to free themselves of colonial rule to reorganise themselves as nation-states. Political theorists who have recently turned their attention to the problem of secession have favoured a more generous right than that allowed by international laws.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup>Inayatullah, *Politics of Ethnicity and Separatism in South Asia* (Lahore: Centre for South Asian Studies, 1988), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup>Alexis Heraclides, "Secession, Self-Determination and Nonintervention: In Quest of a Normative Symbiosis," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 45, no. 2, Winter 1992, p. 401.

<sup>13</sup>There are two basic perspectives underlying the arguments on secession. The less permissive liberal view argues that there is a restricted right to secede, and put s forth moral justifications in favour of maintaining existing states, and a right of secession. The wrongs that create a right of secession include unjust conquest, exploitation, the threat of extermination, and the threat of cultural extinction. The more permissive liberal view believes that a group of people can secede if they

states, however, remain wary of any further division of their territories.

In South Asia, few attempts at secession have been successful, but the tendency remains strong among many groups including the Muhajirs in Pakistan, Nagas and Kashmiris in India, and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Separatism on the other hand is an active political movement within an independent state that aspires to some form of territorial separatism ranging from autonomy to independence. In order to understand its significance, the following issues need to be analysed: the factors accounting for the rise of separatism; the impact of separatism on the groups and the state from which they are seceding; the internal politics of separatism, including the rise of separatist leadership, its legitimisation and control; the international ramifications of movements seeking self-determination, and reaction of the international system; and more significantly why most groups fail to achieve a separate state. In an attempt to address these questions, the study employs contrasting profiles of the Baluch insurrection in Pakistan and the Khalistan movement in India. It hopes that their similarities and dissimilarities will provide insights into the complex phenomenon of separatism in South Asia as a whole.

The Punjab problem, which posed a formidable challenge to the territorial integrity of India, was a result of concurrent social,

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perceive themselves as having a distinct culture so long as they do not violate the rights of others living in the territory. The Communitarian argument holds that secessionist group should be a community of a kind suitable for statehood, and the claim to secede should be upheld only if there really is a community - not if people merely believe there is one or wish they were. See Percy B. Lehning, *Theories of Secession* (London: Routledge, 1988).

economic and political factors that alienated the Sikhs from the rest of the country. With the coming of the green revolution in 1965-66, Punjab became the bread-basket of India, providing much of the country's food supply. However, relative wealth and prosperity could not contain the popular disaffection that had crept into the political landscape of Punjab by the 1980s. The Sikhs demanded a political solution on issues relating to the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, the redistribution of the Ravi Beas river waters, and greater autonomy for Punjab. The failure of state and federal governments to address these political and economic problems of the state facilitated the rise of fundamentalist leaders like Bhindranwale, who began to attract the Sikhs on a communal platform. Thus started a series of atrocities which continued to widen the chasm between the Sikhs and the federal government till 1990. However, after a decade-long war against the state, Punjab limped back to a state of normalcy by 1992.

The Baluch movement presents a stark contrast to the Punjab case, and is an example of how underdevelopment has created grounds for insurgency and secessionism in Pakistan. The Baluch are spread along 900 miles of the Arabian sea coastline and inhabit one of the most barren and arid areas of Pakistan. They harbour deep resentment against the policies of the federal government which are regarded as discriminatory, exploitative and centralising. Despite being rich in natural resources, Baluchistan is the least populated and the most underdeveloped province in Pakistan, with low levels of socio-economic development and political mobilisation. Further, the Baluch have been steadily marginalised in Baluchistan by the Sindhis, Punjabis and, in particular, the Pushtuns whose numbers have risen considerably after the Afghan crisis, resulting in an open conflict for



jobs, space, and business. Thus their sense of ethno-nationalism has been fuelled to a large extent by their perceived deprivation *vis-a-vis* the Punjabi ruling elite at the centre and the Pushtuns at the provincial level. The goals of the Baluch movement have ranged from provincial autonomy to the demand for an Independent Baluchistan and the movement for a "Greater Baluchistan" to include the Baluch areas of Iran and Afghanistan.

While attempting to study the Baluch and the Khalistan movements, this thesis postulates that the course of any movement<sup>14</sup> is contingent on a variety of factors. First is the nature of the movement itself: its leadership, organisational base, numerical strength and the historical and cultural forces which lend character and weight to the movement. Second is the response of governments to ethnic groups: the strategies employed by them *vis-a-vis* the respective groups - coercion, conciliation or a blend of the two, and the socio-political and economic policies of the state towards them. Third is the level of external support provided by other countries to the groups in question, the role of the diaspora in sustaining the movement from outside, and the role of other organisations in providing arms and other forms of support to the groups.

When a particular group becomes aware of its cultural attributes and becomes politically mobilised, a struggle against the state may be initiated. If the state has pursued policies that are perceived as being detrimental to the interests of the group, this could lead to further mobilisation of the groups against the state; depending on the

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<sup>14</sup>For an analysis of the dynamics of movements see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement, Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

response of the state in addressing their legitimate grievances and concerns, the movements may either be contained or flare into something big. State power is usually greater than that of the ethnic group and in some cases the state can deliver a crushing blow to a movement. But where the group's leadership base and infrastructure are strong, and the diaspora active, even the state finds it difficult to overcome the resistance.

If all the above are present - that is, the ethnic group is well organised and has a strong leadership base, the response of the state is more aggressive than conciliatory, and the group finds external support in the form of arms and finance - there is a greater possibility of the group desiring a separate state. The success of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka can be attributed to the concurrence of all these factors. Consequently it can be argued that the reasons why other movements have not followed suit is because they lack one or more of these conditions.

#### *The significance of study and literature review*

The thesis does not resort to any one theory to explain the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict. Using a large instrumentarium developed by primordialist, instrumentalist, relative deprivation and internal colonialism schools of social anthropology and political science, a trans-disciplinary approach is adopted to study certain aspects of ethnicity. This work does not attempt to look into the complex genesis and dynamics of ethnicity as such but concentrates more specifically on the rise of separatism in the subcontinent. The functional relevance of the theories of ethnic behaviour lies in their

being able to explain the phenomenon of separatism, or at least some of its dimensions.<sup>15</sup>

There has been a steady flow of literature on the changing political climate of South Asian countries in the post-colonial situation. However, there has been little analysis of the issues in a comparative framework, especially on a regional basis. Most of the available literature has traced developments in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh independently, without comparing or relating them to the region as a whole (notable exceptions are works by Ayesha Jalal and Urmila Phadnis.<sup>16</sup>) This study is the first attempt of its kind to look at separatism in a comparative perspective contrasting the Baluch in Pakistan with the Sikhs in India.

In the case of the Baluch, most of the literature dwells upon the narrative of events rather than providing a significant contextualisation of those events or a critical analysis of motives, strategies, and tactics of the Baluch movement.<sup>17</sup> Selig Harrison's

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<sup>15</sup> A similar approach has been adopted by Douglas Dion who uses formal theories of politics to study ethnic violence which he treats as simply another form of violence. See Douglas Dion, "Competition and Ethnic Conflict, Artifactual?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, no. 5, October 1997, pp. 638-48.

<sup>16</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nationbuilding in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989) and Ayesha Jalal *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia-A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup>Some of the important primary sources include *The White Paper on Baluchistan* (Rawalpindi: Government of Pakistan, 1974) which gives the official version for the beginnings of the Baluch civil war but stops at 1974, well before the civil war ended. The volumes of the *White Paper on the Performance of the Bhutto Regime* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 1979) provide a general narrative of the performance of the Bhutto government but appear biased and touch upon the Baluch problem in a superficial manner. Of the secondary sources, Inayatullah Baluch's *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan - A Study of Baluchistan* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987), Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch's *Inside Baluchistan, Political Autobiography of Khan-e-Azam, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1975), and Sardar Mohammad Khan Baluch's *History of the Baluch Race and Baluchistan* (Karachi: Process Pakistan, 1958) give a lucid account of the historical and cultural basis of the Baluch movement but do not deal with the

work is one of the more informative accounts of the Baluch movement while Janmahmad traces the history of the movement to a more recent period.<sup>18</sup>

For the Khalistan movement, the sources are numerous with a wealth of both primary and secondary information.<sup>19</sup> Important primary sources used here include statistical abstracts, the *White Paper on the Punjab Crisis*, the *Blue Paper on the Massacre in the Sikh Homeland*<sup>20</sup> and interviews with important political leaders. Among recent secondary works, Paul Brass, Robin Jeffrey, Ramesh K. Chauhan, and Sharda Jain<sup>21</sup> provide a good analytical account of the Punjab crisis.

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political ramifications of Baluch nationalism. Tariq Ali's *Can Pakistan Survive; The Death of a State* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), Khalid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan, The Nature and Direction of Change* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), Tahir Amin's *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan, Domestic and International Factors* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1988), Satish Kumar's *The New Pakistan* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978) fill up this lacuna but do not give a detailed, comprehensive coverage of the movement.

<sup>18</sup> Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow, Soviet Temptations and the Emergence of Baluch Nationalism* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981) and Janmahmad, *Essays in Baluch National Struggle in Pakistan-Emergence, Dimensions, Repercussions* (Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Secondary sources on Sikh religion and history include Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vols. 1 & 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Rajiv Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986); W. H. McLeod, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), Marc Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar, Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), Christopher Shackle, *The Sikhs* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1984), Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh, *Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Blue Star and After* (New Delhi: Vision Books Ltd, 1984). These provide a straightforward, descriptive narrative of the Punjab crisis while a more analytical account is given in Pramod Kumar et al., *Punjab Crisis: Context and Trends* (Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, 1984). For the external dimensions of the crisis, significant works include Ghani Jafar, *The Sikh Volcano* (Islamabad: Vanguard Books, 1987) and Maqsood Ahmed Masod and Peter Stockdale, *The Khalistan Riddle* (Islamabad: Modern Book Depot, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation* (1984), *Blue Paper on the Massacre in the Sikh Homeland-In Response to Mrs Gandhi's White Paper dated 10 July 1984* (New York: World Sikh Organisation, 1984).

<sup>21</sup>; Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), Robin Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India? Punjab, Ethnic Conflict and the Test for Federalism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994), Ramesh K. Chauhan, *Punjab and the Nationality Question* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep

*Thesis outline*

A selective survey of the literature on ethnicity is contained in Chapter 1 which also provides a conceptual framework for the study. It introduces key terms such as ethnicity, nation, nationalism and separatism. The relevance of various models - primordialist, instrumentalist, cultural pluralist, Marxist, internal colonialism and relative deprivation - is also discussed here. It is, however, asserted that no one theory can be applied exclusively to explain the emergence or persistence of conflict in society, including separatism.

The second chapter provides further elucidation to the theoretical concepts outlined in Chapter 1. While this thesis concerns itself primarily with the Baluch and Khalistan case studies, Chapter 2 presents a general picture of the South Asian scene in order to gain a broader understanding of the processes at work in the region and in particular, India and Pakistan. These are particularly relevant to understanding the policies of both countries towards insurgent groups other than the Baluch and the Sikhs. The Sindhi and the Mohajir Quami Movements in Pakistan, and the cases of Kashmir and the North East in India are particularly instructive in this regard. Similarly the Chakmas of Bangladesh can be likened to the Baluch and North East tribal groups in India, to compare the policies of the respective countries in the treatment of their frontier tribal communities. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's case in Sri Lanka explains why some movements are still active while others have petered out.

The socio-political and economic background to the Baluch and Khalistan case studies will be dealt with in Chapter 3 which focuses on the nature of the movements. The period selected for the study coincides with the gestation, operation, and decay of the respective movements. In the case of the Baluch, the study ranges from 1971, the beginning of the civil war, to 1981. This period covers the rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and a few years of the rule of Zia ul Haq, thereby providing a contrast between the supposedly democratic regime of Bhutto and the military dictatorship of Zia in dealing with the crisis. The study stops at 1981, when the movement was in decline. There have been sporadic bouts of ethnic violence in Baluchistan between the Baluch and the Pushtuns since, but the movement has ceased to be an issue in contemporary Pakistani politics. Similarly, for Khalistan the period covered stretches from 1978, with the beginnings of religious fundamentalism under Sikh leader Sant Bhindranwale up to 1992, which was a watershed for the Khalistan movement.

The strategies of India and Pakistan in dealing with the respective groups will be discussed in this penultimate chapter. It looks at the strategies employed by the respective governments to contain ethnic conflict and at how policies of nation-building affected minority communities. Both India and Pakistan have instituted policies to address the grievances of minority ethnic groups, but when faced with the threat of secession by the groups in question, they have displayed both conciliatory and coercive tactics to silence them. The nature of party politics and the inter-party conflict between the Akali party and the Congress at both state and national levels will also be dealt with as part of the overall framework of centre-state relations in India.

External interventions and their underlying causes form the substance of the last chapter. It studies the links of the Baluch and Khalistan movements with their diasporas and with other external powers that have claimed to have supported the movements at different periods of time. It is argued that an independent Khalistan and an independent or Greater Baluchistan were unlikely from the very outset, but lack of timely support from external powers made the realisation of these goals even more difficult.

### *Methodology*

Data for the study have been drawn from government archival sources, documents produced by the movements, secondary studies and interviews. There is an abundance of primary and secondary sources on the Khalistan movement, and interviews with important political leaders were conducted during the course of my field work in New Delhi and Punjab in 1996 and 1998.

In the case of the Baluch, the scarcity of primary literature, and more significantly the author's inability to gain access to Pakistan, made data collection difficult. Reliance therefore had to be placed on major secondary sources, gathered from libraries and archives in Canberra, London, and New Delhi. Interviews with expatriate Baluch personalities were carried out in London in June 1996; in some cases, anonymity was requested. I have used the sources to the best of my ability, but the field remains open for further research.

## Chapter 1

### THEORIES OF ETHNICITY

Ethnic conflicts have been on the increase in recent years in both scale and reach. According to a survey of states in armed conflict in 1988, of a total of 111 such conflicts in the world, 63 were internal and 36 were described as "wars of state formation" i.e. conflicts involving one government and an opposition group demanding autonomy or secession for a particular ethnic group or region.<sup>1</sup> Despite a slight decline, 96 armed conflicts<sup>2</sup> were reported during the period 1989-95, out of which 35 remained active in 1995.<sup>3</sup>

However, despite growing evidence to this effect, relatively little attention has been paid to the underlying causes and dynamics of ethnicity.

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Ethnic Conflicts and their Impact on International Society," *International Social Science Journal*, no. 127, February 1991, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>According to Peter Wallenstein and Margareta Sollenberg, an armed conflict is a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. See Peter Wallenstein and Margareta Sollenberg, "The End of International War? Armed Conflict 1985-95," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, no. 3, 1996, p. 367.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 353. For a list of armed conflicts in the world, 1989-95 see pp. 358-69.



In fact, most scholars have tended to either ignore the question of ethnic diversity or look upon it as an

ephemeral nuisance that would unquestionably give way to a common identity uniting all inhabitants of the state, regardless of ethnic heritage, as modern communication and transportation networks linked the state's various parts more closely.<sup>4</sup>

It was only in the 1970s that the question of ethnicity sparked new concern among social scientists because ethnic conflicts persisted despite the oft-repeated claims of modernists that these would fade away in the course of time as political and economic interaction among people transcended parochial barriers for larger, broad-based communities. The fact that instead of declining, ethnic conflicts have been on the rise in both modernising and developed societies thus justifies the concern for ethnic issues in recent years. Before examining the causes of ethnic conflict, terms such as "nation," "state," "nation-state," and an "ethnic group" need some elucidation.

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<sup>4</sup>Walker Connor, "Nation Building or Nation Destroying," in *Ethnonationalism - The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 29.

*Definitions of State, Nation, Nation-State and Ethnic Group*

State, as commonly defined, is a politico judicial entity which is identified by its sovereign right over a defined territory. As Smith points out:

Generically the state comprises a set of differentiated autonomous and public institution which are territorial centralised and claim jurisdiction over a given territory including the monopoly over coercion and extraction.<sup>a</sup>

According to him, the main functions of a modern state include among others defence of territory from any external incursion, be it physical or cultural, and conflict resolution within its borders wherein the state acts as an arbiter to contain conflict between competing elites and groups.

Max Weber defines states as a societal organisation which claims authority over a given population in a specific territory wherein it imposes its will through a system of administration and well defined law.<sup>b</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed conceives state as an arbiter which society has created to resolve disputes among members in accordance with universal rules and procedures.<sup>c</sup> He further argues that all states are expressions of organised power and are almost headed by power elites and dominant classes. In the ultimate analysis, the power of the state rests on its ability to handle both internal and external challenges.<sup>d</sup> Most contemporary theories of modern state can be broadly grouped under the group pluralist perspective and the Marxist perspective. Scholars subscribing for the group

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<sup>a</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "State-Making and Nation-Buildings," in John A. Hall (ed.) *States in History* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1986), p. 235.

<sup>b</sup> Max Weber, "Basic Categories of Social Organisation," in W.G. Runciman (ed.), *Weber Selections in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 41.

<sup>c</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Pinter Publications, 1998), p. 27.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30

and creates agencies which serve the interests of particular category of population. The state is not an independent force that acts either to prevent organisation of some groups or to promote organisations of others.<sup>e</sup>

The classical Marxists, on the other hand, see the state as preserving the dominant economic mode of production and promoting the interests of the dominant class. It is seen as an organ of class domination by bourgeoisie in its struggle with proletariat. Neo-Marxists scholars, however, argue that the state is not just a product of class struggle but is a relatively autonomous force. The state apparatus develops interests of its own in maintaining its power and control. While pursuing this objective they may act independently or even go against what the dominant group desires.<sup>f</sup>

Paul Brass elucidates the point further by stating that the "state tends both to favours some classes and ethnic groups at particular points in time as also develop relationships with elites to serve its own interests".<sup>g</sup> He also argues that a state particularly, in developing societies, is both a resource and distributor of resources on the one hand and a source and promoter of new values on the other. This often leads to struggles for control at the centre over the state itself over which groups engage in a continuing struggles in society undergoing secularisation, modernisation and industrialisation.<sup>h</sup> Nation, on the other hand, is generally defined as a politico cultural entity which can be identified by its "character" and collective rights.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>e</sup> For details see Alfred Stepan, *The State and Society : Peru in Comparative Perspective* (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 11-16.

<sup>f</sup> For a useful discussion of these views see Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism - Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 250-51.

<sup>g</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>h</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 272-75.

<sup>i</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 36

Definitions of nation abound. To Stalin, a nation was a historically constituted stable community of people with a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.<sup>5</sup> Max Weber defined the nation as a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself into a state of its own.<sup>6</sup> A nation could also be seen as a particular type of ethnic community, or rather, as an ethnic community politicised, with recognised group rights in the political system.<sup>7</sup>

For Walker Connor, conceptualising the nation is difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence, according to him "is a psychological bond that joins people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in the most vital way."<sup>8</sup> In other words what ultimately matters is not what is but what people believe is. He defines a state as a territorial political unit which can be quantified in terms of its area and population.

It can thus be said that while states are political and legal entities that exercise sovereignty over a specified territory and wield power over its inhabitants, nations are sociological collectivities based on ethnic and cultural affinities as well as shared perceptions of these affinities that may or may not be constituted into states, but which, in any case become politically relevant when they acquire political (national) consciousness.<sup>9</sup> A state could comprise many nations, but a

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<sup>5</sup>See Joseph Stalin, "The Nation," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup>Max Weber, "The Nation," in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), *Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism - Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a ...." in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), *Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>9</sup>Rodolfo Stavenhagen, *The Ethnic Question, Conflicts, Development, and Human Rights* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1990), p. 1.

nation may or may not constitute a state. At the same time a nation may exist without a state and a state may exist without a nation.

The two may come together to form a nation-state. In other words, a nation-state could be a nation having political sovereignty or it could be used to describe a territorial-political unit (a state) whose borders

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coincide with the territorial distribution of a national group.<sup>10</sup> However, the construction of a nation-state has proved to be a challenging task in the modern world where the multi-ethnic character of the state makes it difficult for the nation and the state to blend into one another. According to Walker Connor, of a survey of 132 entities considered to be states in 1971 only 12 states (9.1 percent) could be described as nation-states.<sup>11</sup> Yet the concept of the nation-state is what most states aspire to in contemporary political society, the driving force being the ideology of nationalism.

There are many dimensions of nationalism but the most important variants are, first, what preceded the establishment of the nation-state, and, second, what form of nationalism is pursued by the present government in power. This distinction is particularly relevant for developing societies in Asia and Africa where in the early years of achieving independence nationalist sentiments were an expression of anti-colonialism which attempted to gloss over ethnic, religious, regional and other differences. The second phase, commonly referred to as nation-building, marked the beginning of post-colonial nationalism, in which the state assumed control over the various groups who in turn pledged undying allegiance to the state, which saw itself as the nation.

An ethnic group or *ethnie* has been defined by Anthony Smith as "named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a

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<sup>10</sup>Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation" in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), *Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

sense of solidarity."<sup>12</sup> Myths of descent and shared history are based on an emotional appeal to one's own sense of social self-definition and solidarity; language, religion, social customs, folklore, food, and music help bind members together to make them aware of how different they are *vis-a-vis* other ethnic groups; a symbolic geographical centre helps members of the ethnies to relate to one another even when they are scattered across the globe; and a strong sense of belonging and a feeling of solidarity override class, factional and regional divisions during times of stress and danger.<sup>13</sup> Closely related to the dimensions of identity formation and ethnic groups is the notion of ethnicity which may be seen as a device as much as a focus for group mobilisation by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purposes.<sup>14</sup> Conflict is likely if ethnic passions are politically mobilised and threaten the sanctity of existing political structures.

Though many theories of ethnicity have been propounded, there is no one comprehensive theory or ideology which explains, in its entirety, the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict. Processes of ethnic group formations and ethnic conflict have been largely studied within the broad framework of various schools such as primordialist, modernist, instrumentalist, Marxist, relative deprivation, and internal colonialism.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), p. 32.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 24-30.

<sup>14</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>For a broad overview of theories of ethnicity see John Rex and David Mason (eds), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

*The primordialist theory*

The primordialist school argues that ethnic identities are not chosen but given: they proceed from the cultural givens of the past, such as immediate contiguity and kin connection; sense of belonging to a religious community; speaking a particular language or dialect; and following certain social practices. The concept of primordialism was first introduced by Shils, who argued that primordial attachments to kin, territory, and religion were characterised by a state of intense and comprehensive solidarity, "coerciveness," "ineffable significance," "fervour and passion"; and "sacredness."<sup>16</sup> However, he did not elaborate on primordial sentiments apart from stating that they differed from ties to other social units.

This concept was developed further by Clifford Geertz who attributed a key role to primordial loyalties in the political development of post-colonial states. According to Geertz,

these congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsmen, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself.<sup>17</sup>

The primordial perspective focuses primarily on the emotional strength of ethnic bonds which can persist for hundreds or thousands of years and can override loyalties to other important collectivities or affiliations. Thus, even though the strength of such primordial bonds might vary in different cases, every person, in every society, at almost

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<sup>16</sup>James McKay, "An Exploratory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizationist Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 4, October 1982, p. 396.

<sup>17</sup>Clifford Geertz, *Old Societies and New States, The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), p. 104.



all times, will have some attachments which will flow from a sense of natural affinity rather than social interaction. Such attachments provide a basis for the formation of social and political groupings which continue to influence the daily lives of people. There are many such loyalties in the new states, but while loyalties based on class, party, or business can at best threaten a revolution, disaffection based on primordial ties of race, language or culture can have far greater repercussions on the integrity of nation-states and can lead to a possible redrawing or reorganisation of states through partition, irredentism or merger of state territories<sup>18</sup>.

Primordial factors have also been emphasised in varying degrees by other scholars such as Greeley,<sup>19</sup> who maintains that despite the effects of modernisation, primordial sentiments still endure among the descendants of European immigrants in Canada and the USA; and Da Silva,<sup>20</sup> who argues that the continued vigour of Basque nationalism is because of the emotional power of the Basques' group identity. Similarly, several analysts have commented on how a state like Lebanon has modernised without a corresponding decline in the primordial loyalties of the inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> According to Pierre L. van den Berghe, both ethnicity and race (in the social sense) are, in fact, extensions of the idiom of kinship, and, therefore, ethnic and race sentiments are to be understood as an extended and attenuated form

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>19</sup>A. Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance* (New York: Wiley, 1974).

<sup>20</sup>M. Da Silva, "Modernisation and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of the Basques," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 7, 1975, pp. 227-51.

<sup>21</sup>See H. Barakat, "Social and Political Integration in Lebanon: A Case of Social Mosaic," *Middle East Journal*, Vol 27, 1973, pp. 301-18.

of kin selection which can be expected to persist even in industrial societies.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the benefits of its approach, the primordialist position came under severe attack in the 1950s and 1960s when social scientists treated ethnicity as one affiliation among many, highly changeable and responsive to circumstances. The primordialist position has been attacked on several fronts.<sup>23</sup> First, primordial sentiments are usually static in nature and are not seen to change or display dynamic properties because of their atavistic attributes. This position does not explain the fluidity of ethnic relationships and the waxing and waning of ethnic sentiments in different circumstances. This circumstantial fluidity can hardly be reconciled with the primordialist sentiment.<sup>24</sup> Second, primordialism stops at asserting the nature of ethnic sentiment without giving any further explanation of it, relying largely on nebulous romantic ideologies of nationalists. Third, the sense of primacy about ethnicity in primordial literature is so great that rather than viewing ethnicity as a possible focus of identity it is seen as the cardinal orientation, not taking into account those people who might not feel ethnic at all and are not psychologically aberrant as a result. Fourth, the severity of ethnic conflict is linked so strongly to the intense emotional power of primordial attachments that it ignores the fact that people can have their consciousness raised to highly emotional levels which have no primordial orientations.

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<sup>22</sup>van den berghe, "Race and ethnicity: A Sociological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 4, October 1978, p. 403.

<sup>23</sup>For details see James McKay, op. cit., pp. 398-99.

<sup>24</sup>van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (The Netherlands: Elsevier, 1981), pp. 17-18.

Thus, even though the primordial perspective is very useful for understanding the emotional basis of ethnicity and the tenacity of ethnic bonds, it is unable to account for social change and other political and economic influences, failing thereby to provide a comprehensive explanation of the ethnic phenomena. If one believes that primordial attachments exist prior to all interaction, it is hard to account for the emergence of new ethnic groups under colonial rule in rural areas and towns.<sup>25</sup>

Far from primordial sentiments being natural "givens," some scholars argue that they need to be constantly renewed and modified, and require creative effort and investment.<sup>26</sup> An ethnic identity may also be carefully constructed by an upwardly mobile entrepreneur looking for a political base, or by introducing ethnic disputes into civil service or university.<sup>27</sup> The main objection to primordialism, then, according to Jack David Eller and Reed M. Coughlan, is that

it offers no mechanism for the genesis of its phenomena, nor does it recognise or explicate any significant relationship between ethnic attachments and the ongoing social experiences of ethnic members.<sup>28</sup>

They feel that while ethnicity is an affect issue, distinct from strictly material or instrumental issues, this by no means makes it primordial because emotions are not always primordial but have a clear and

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<sup>25</sup>Kasfir Nelson, "Explaining Ethnic Political Participation," *World Politics*, Vol. 31, no. 3, April 1979, p. 368.

<sup>26</sup>Hoben and Hefner, "The Integrative Revolution Revisited," *World Development*, Vol.19, no. 1, 1990, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>28</sup>Jack David Eller and Reed M. Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism: The Demystification of Ethnic Attachments," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 2, April 1993, p. 194.

analysable sociogenesis, a fact not recognised by the primordialist school.<sup>29</sup>

*The modernist theory*

The modernisation paradigm which has also been influential in the social sciences for a long time saw ethnic conflicts as vestigial and irrational residues of pre-industrial societies, doomed to be swept aside by the process of modernisation. In case they persisted, they were seen as obstacles to change or as the consequences of incomplete modernisation. Another view within the modernisation paradigm argued that ethnic conflict is an integral part - even a product - of the process of modernisation.<sup>30</sup> This idea was first advanced by Karl W. Deutsch who conceived social mobilisation as "an overall process of change, which happens to substantial parts of the population in

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<sup>29</sup>Jack David Eller and Reed M. Coughlan, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>30</sup>Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 99.

countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life."<sup>31</sup>

Deutsch believed that within any geographical setting and any population, economic, social and technological developments mobilise individuals for more intensive communication. A decisive factor in national assimilation was found to be the fundamental process of social mobilisation which accompanied the growth of markets, industries, and towns, and eventually of literacy and mass communication, and it is this rate of assimilation which, together with the process of mobilisation, determined the outcome of national development. The rate of assimilation was itself dependent on a variety of factors such as similarity in communication habits; facilities for learning and teaching; frequency of contacts; material rewards and penalties; values and desires and symbols and barriers.<sup>32</sup>

Deutsch has, however, come under criticism for his inconsistent position. Walker Connor feels that while, on one hand, Deutsch believes that increased contacts between culturally diverse people might increase antagonisms,<sup>33</sup> there are other times where Deutsch is convinced that modernisation in such forms as urbanisation, industrialisation, and communication will lead to assimilation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilisation and Political Development," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, no. 3, September 1961, p. 493.

<sup>32</sup>For details see Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication - An inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1953), pp. 156-64.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>34</sup>For a good critique of Deutsch's theory see Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism - The Quest for Understanding*, op. cit., pp. 30-35.

Furthermore, while modernisation theory postulates that as the society modernises, greater political and economic interaction among people and widespread communication networks will break down people's parochial identities with ethnic groups and replace them with loyalties to larger groups, there has been a sharp increase in the incidence of ethnic conflicts through the 1970s to the 1990s. Multi-ethnic states at all levels of modernity and socio-economic development have been affected by such conflict. Examples include the technologically advanced regions of Western Europe such as Spain with its problems of Basques, Catalans, and on a lower level, the Galicians; rivalry of Walloon and Flemish people within Belgium, and South Tyroleans' dissatisfaction with Italy.

Thus far from reducing conflict, there is a substantial body of data which supports the proposition that material increases in what Deutsch termed social communication and mobilisation tend to increase cultural awareness and exacerbate ethnic conflict.<sup>35</sup> These advances in communication not only make the individual more aware of other ethnic groups but make him acutely conscious of his own identity as well.

*Marxist perspective: neo-Marxists and the world system approach*

The Marxists offer yet another insight, viewing ethnic conflict as a means of detracting from the consciousness of class interests and as being manipulated by political leadership and vested interests. Many Marxist theories have come under criticism for their inability to come to terms with racism except as a functional need for capitalism or as

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<sup>35</sup>Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, op. cit., p. 37.

an ideology that prevents workers from understanding their class interests. However, most theorists of modernisation, having realised the futility of the argument that ethnic identities will wither away as modernisation progresses, now believe that there are other factors that help to keep ethnic conflicts alive in various societies.

The neo-Marxists, inspired by the teachings of Marx, interpret race and ethnicity within the context of the mode of production which, according to some, also opens up the danger of reductionism or viewing ethnicity as secondary to class formations.<sup>36</sup> One of the early contributors to the neo-Marxian theory of race, Oliver C. Cox, believed that racial exploitation and race prejudice developed among Europeans with the rise of capitalism and nationalism, and because of the world-wide ramifications of capitalism, all racial antagonisms can be traced to the policies of the capitalist people, the white people of Europe and North America. He maintained that the continuing need to keep Indian and later African labour in a servile status to assure profits marked the beginning of racial antagonism. According to Cox, racial division of labour benefited the capitalist class but had adverse implications for the entire proletariat, white or black, by dividing them along racial lines.<sup>37</sup> However, to suggest that capitalism caused racism, or needed racism, is to understate the complexity of emerging economic, social and cultural forces.

Michael Reich improved Cox's theory and devised by means of econometric analyses a model of a capitalist economy rooted in Marx's conception of the antagonism between capitalists and workers to

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<sup>36</sup>See Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard, *Sexism, Racism and Oppression* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 2-3.

<sup>37</sup>Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race* (New York: Monthly Review, 1959).

explain racial inequality.<sup>38</sup> He showed how racism could be functional for the capitalist class and how it could be reinforced in a modern market economy in which profitability remains the prime motive for production.

While neo-Marxist theories look at racism as an independent phenomenon operating as a cause in its own right, they still maintain that understanding the effects of such a cause requires situating racism within relations of production. According to Sidney Wilhelm, "racism exists regardless of class distinctions yet it will be implemented in ways that reflect class interests."<sup>39</sup> According to Richard Thompson,

Marxist theories, be they of racism and sexism or some other social phenomenon, must take the particular economic structure in which the phenomena occur as the primary framework of analysis... the economic structure is primary to the extent that it is the underlying framework that both unifies the social whole and determines in a structural sense how other aspects such as racism will function and be reproduced.<sup>40</sup>

### *World system theory*

Yet another variation of the Marxist approach is the world system theory developed by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in 1974, which interprets the underdevelopment of the third world as a result of exploitation by the advanced capitalist countries. According to this theory, lesser developed countries become dependent on the developed countries whose economic interests are seen as inimical to

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<sup>38</sup>Michael Reich, *Racial Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 269.

<sup>39</sup>Sydney M. Wilhelm, *Black in a White America* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1983), p. 145.

<sup>40</sup>Richard Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 169.



development in the third world. This basic conception has been applied to race and ethnicity. Ethnic processes are viewed in a single, unitary framework to account for their complex manifestations in various parts of the world.

The modern world system refers to the capitalist world economy that originated in Northwestern Europe during the sixteenth century and has since expanded to encompass the entire world and its inhabitants. The substance of Wallerstein's theory rests on the premise that the contemporary world consists of a single mode of production, capitalism, with the aim of production for profit in a world market.<sup>41</sup> Unlike the traditional Marxist definition, which equates Marxism with the prevalence of wage-labour relations, the world system does not presuppose the creation of wage-labour relations. In fact it is characterised by the existence of a single international division of labour that comprises different modes of labour control such as slavery and coerced cash crop labour, as well as free wage labour.

The world system is made up of three components: the core, semiperiphery, and periphery.<sup>42</sup> A particular state's or region's standing in the world system is determined by the degree to which it is a surplus-extracting state or region (core) or a surplus-producing state or region (the periphery). The core areas possess indigenous

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<sup>41</sup>According to Richard Thompson, there is little difference in Wallerstein's view between production of profit by individuals and production of profits by states such as the former Soviet Union, Cuba and China. It is believed that both forms of production are capitalist to the extent that they produce commodities for a world market and seek individual or collective advantages in the world market. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>42</sup> All regions occupy one of the three categories and function within the system which is dynamic and thus allows individual states or regions to change their standing in the world economy. This dynamism stems from three basic antinomies present in the capitalist system: contradiction between the economy and polity; supply and demand; and capital and labour. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 273.

capitalist enterprises that are technologically sophisticated, whereas peripheral economies are at the financial mercy of core states and lack both an industrial base, and a large indigenous capitalist class. They tend to produce labour-intensive agricultural and industrial products for export in firms in which the producers do not own the means of production.<sup>43</sup>

The three components, however, operate as a single entity in which the surplus extraction by the core produces impoverishment at the periphery, preventing simultaneous levels of development for all areas. The dependence of peripheral or semiperipheral states on core states is both economic and political.<sup>44</sup>

The class structures in the core and peripheral areas as enumerated by Wallerstein provide the crucial links in understanding his position with regard to race and ethnicity. According to him, dominant core areas expanded to incorporate small, weak, and culturally and racially distinct peoples into the international division of labour. And while this happened racism developed as an ideology that rationalised and justified domination of people. Racial, ethnic, and other groups are but blurred collective representations of classes.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>For example, United States, Japan and Western Europe are designated as core regions while peripheral regions include countries such as Bolivia, Ethiopia and Zaire. Semiperipheral regions (Canada, Australia, Saudi Arabia) exhibit some characteristics of the core areas and some features of the periphery areas acting in part as a peripheral zone for core countries and a core country for some peripheral areas. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy*, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>44</sup>The core states are highly bureaucratized and stable with large armies, and possess a high degree of legitimacy among their constituents. Conversely, states that consist mainly of peripheral zones tend to be unstable, have a small and relatively unprofessional and inefficient bureaucracy and small armies, and often lack legitimacy among their constituents. See Richard Thompson, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>45</sup>Wallerstein, op. cit., p. 181.

Similarly, Susan Olzak Kiyoteru Tsutsui traces the inequalities generated by the world system to ethnic mobilisation which occurs if dominant groups reassert their dominance over newly competing groups or as formerly disadvantaged groups challenge the existing power structure.<sup>46</sup> She concludes that ethnic conflict is more frequent in core countries, but it is shaped within an institutional context of civil rights and liberties. In peripheral nations, ethnic conflict is far less effective but the transformation of ethnic protests, however feeble, into armed rebellions depends on the history of the ethnic movements and reactions by government authorities.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the explanatory power of the world system perspective it suffers from many limitations. The main criticism stems from its seeking to interpret world events by means of a single unifying framework. According to one source, the division of the world into the core, semiperiphery and periphery regions obscures more specific and important differences among states which occupy the same position in the world economy with respect to their modes of production<sup>48</sup> and social formation. For example, China and Canada, categorised as semiperipheral countries, do not, as the world system theories suggest, produce the same forms of ethnic social organisation.<sup>49</sup> Wallerstein believes that the peripheral regions merely react to the dictates of the core zones and that the internal institutions, modes of production, indigenous cultures, and class structures of the peripheral countries have little importance in the

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<sup>46</sup>Tsutsui, Susan O., "Status in the World System and Ethnic Mobilisation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, no. 6, December 1998, p. 695.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 691-715.

<sup>48</sup>Richard Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>49</sup>For a comparison of the two countries see *ibid.*, pp. 127-35. Also see Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 264.

historical development of the world system or even their own national system.

Such a view dismisses the specific internal conditions that exist in peripheral regions. According to one critic,

the effort of analysis should be oriented towards the elaboration of concepts capable of explaining how the general trends in capitalist expansion are transformed into specific relationships between men, classes and states, how these specific relations in turn react upon the general trends of the capitalist system, how internal and external processes of political domination reflect one another, both in their capabilities and contradictions.<sup>50</sup>

Wallerstein has also come under criticism from the Marxists for redefining capitalism by excluding wage-labour relations and not differentiating among capitalist and non-capitalist forms of commodity production, surplus appropriation, and the *modus operandi* of different modes of production. Marxists such as Robert Brenner maintain that because of the exclusion of wage-labour relations, Wallerstein is unable to explain the dynamics of capitalism and hence cannot really distinguish between its earlier and later stages of development or appreciate the qualitative differences between the capitalist and other modes of production.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, as pointed out by some scholars, the world system theory does not explain the rise of revolutionary or socialist movements. It is based on the assumption that the capitalist world system is the only world system and that all existing socialist states are nothing but

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<sup>50</sup>Gabriel Palma, *Dependency and Development: A Critical Overview* (London: Francis Pitner, 1981), pp. 61-62.

<sup>51</sup>Robert Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism," *New Left Review*, no. 104, 1977, pp. 25-87.

integral parts of the capitalist world system that reinforce rather than counter the system.<sup>52</sup>

### *Instrumentalist theory*

The instrumentalist theory does not treat ethnicity as a given but as social and political construction of the elites who draw upon, distort and manipulate certain cultural symbols of the groups they represent to protect the interests of the groups or derive political and economic advantages for the groups as well as for themselves.

According to Paul Brass,

ethnicity is the study of the process by which elites and counter elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilise the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups.<sup>53</sup>

Brass contends that ethnic identity arises out of specific types of interactions between the leadership of centralising states and elites from non-dominant ethnic groups and it is this elite competition which precipitates ethnic conflict. The conflicts arise out of political and economic factors rather than the cultural values of the groups in question, because the cultural practices are often transformed into political symbols by the elites who are competing with each other for control over territory, status, and power.

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<sup>52</sup>See Alex Dupuy and Barry Truchil, "The Limits of the World-System Perspective," in Rhonda F. Levine and Jerry Lembcke (eds), *Recapturing Marxism, An Appraisal of Recent Trends in Sociological Theory* (New York: Praeger, 1987), pp. 130-34.

<sup>53</sup>Paul Brass, "Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims in South Asia," in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp (eds), *Political Identity in South Asia* (London: Curzon Press Ltd, 1979), p. 41.

The instrumentalists believe that modernisation and industrialisation in multi-ethnic states tend to proceed unevenly and often benefit one group at the cost of another. However, this inequality between the different ethnic groups or regions does not transform into communal or national consciousness by itself. It is only when certain individuals make a conscious effort to mobilise the group in question that the group becomes aware of its disadvantageous or advantageous position *vis-a-vis* others.

According to Brass, this form of ethnic self-consciousness occurs only when there is some conflict either between indigenous and external elites or amongst indigenous elites. These manifest themselves as conflicts between a local aristocracy attempting to maintain its privileges against an alien conqueror; between competing religious elites from different ethnic groups; between religious elites and the native aristocracy within an ethnic group; and between native religious elites and an alien aristocracy.<sup>54</sup>

Whether or not an ethnic group, mobilised by its elites goes on to make major political demands and how far it succeeds depends principally on four factors - the perception of an unequal distribution of resources against or in favour of the group; the degree to which the process of building communal consciousness has involved the creation of the organizational resources necessary to build a political movement; the response of the government to the demands and grievances of the group; and the general political context.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>For details see Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism-Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 26-30.

<sup>55</sup>Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 41.

Nationalism is most likely to develop when new elites arise to challenge a system of stratification or an existing pattern of distribution of economic resources and political power between ethnically distinct and rival groups or ethnically distinctive regions. It may focus directly on specific job opportunities or on the allocation of the investment capital and other resources.

The success of the movement is also dependent upon both the character of internal social and political communication and organization. The central argument of the instrumentalists is that for an ethnic movement to succeed, it is necessary that the elites are able to pursue, or at least appear to pursue, effectively the interests of other social classes within the ethnic group.<sup>56</sup> If the immediate demands of its elites are satisfied in the political and economic systems, the movement may peter out.

The movement must also be able to be strong enough to withstand government efforts to suppress it or undercut its political support. Government policies and institutional mechanisms may influence a group's capacity to survive as a separate entity. The policies available to governments to limit the influence of ethnic groups range from the most extreme forms of repression, including genocide and deportation to policies designed to undercut potential bases for ethnic group mobilization through assimilation of ethnic group leaders into the structures of power and wealth in society.<sup>57</sup> Some times governments may choose to follow pluralist policies by establishing political structures such as federalism or by conceding to different ethnic groups the right to receive education through the medium of their mother tongue and protect, preserve and promote their culture in a variety of ways.

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<sup>56</sup>Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

The movement is also influenced by the general political context, such as the willingness of the elites of the dominant group to share power with aspirant ethnic group leaders and the potential availability of alternative political arenas. When the willingness to share power does not exist, the society could be headed for conflict.

The fact that new cultural groups can be created for purposes of economic and political domination does not, however, mean that primordialist sentiments are not important in the study of ethnic conflicts. The instrumentalist theory recognises the persistence of atavistic attributes such as race, colour, religion, and language, but also maintains that the mere persistence of these among the groups is no indication that an ethnic movement will arise among them or whether such movements will be effective in mobilising their members. According to Paul Brass,

Such cultural persistence suggests only that it is likely that the groups can be mobilised on the basis of specific appeals ....and that, when ethnic appeals are made, the pre-existing communal and educational institutions of the groups will, if made available for the purpose, provide an effective means of political mobilisation.<sup>58</sup>

He uses this example in the case of South Asia where he argues that the Muslim identity evolved out of direct competition between Hindus and Muslims. The cow, for instance holds a special significance for the Hindus; it is a venerated animal and killing and eating beef is not a general practice amongst the Hindus. It could be used by the Hindu religious and political groups both as a potential rallying symbol to unite the Hindus, as well as a ploy against the Muslims. Paul Brass also shows how political mobilisation among Muslims was based upon the

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<sup>58</sup>Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 74.



exploitation of selective symbols of identity such as the Urdu language, which was the lingua franca of the Muslims in India.<sup>59</sup> Hindi and Urdu, the two languages spoken mainly in the north of India, are quite similar to each other but both Hindu and Muslim elites have used the Urdu-Hindi controversy to emphasise the differences between the Hindus and Muslims and to make either community believe that a threat to the language was equivalent to an affront to their respective religions.

As with most theories, while the instrumentalist theory has considerable explanatory power for *some* groups in *certain* situations, it does not satisfactorily account for all ethnic phenomena. For one thing, explanations which deal exclusively with political and economic factors tend to underrate the emotional power of ethnic bonds and exaggerate the influence of materialism on human behaviour.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 96-102.

<sup>60</sup>Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, op. cit., pp. 42-47.

Second, not all ethnic groups pursue activities that are geared towards deriving economic and political benefits - some groups indulge in activities that are socially disadvantageous, and sometimes even contrary to self-preservation. Third, this theory does not explain why a particular movement is successful at a given time and not at others. For example, while one cannot deny the role of the ruling elites - both regional and national - in sustaining some movements, the fact that they have not been able to do so consistently points to a major flaw in the mobilisationist approach.

This has led some scholars to incorporate both the primordialist and instrumentalist elements to explain the rise of conflict in multi-ethnic societies. According to Anthony Smith,

any realistic account of ethnic identity and ethno-genesis must eschew the polar extremes of the primordialist-instrumentalist debate and its concerns with, on the one hand, fixity of cultural patterns in nature and, on the other, strategic manipulability of ethnic sentiments and continuous cultural malleability.<sup>61</sup>

### *Relative deprivation*

Another theory that helps to explain political mobilisation is the concept of relative deprivation defined by Ted Gurr as the actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping.<sup>62</sup> This discrepancy often leads to a propensity for aggressive behaviour and the potential for violence depends on the

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<sup>61</sup>For details see Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 25-26.

<sup>62</sup>Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 24.

intensity of discontent and the proportion of the group's members who are intensely discontented.

Relative deprivation, however, is largely based on the perception of the groups in question with regard to what they mean by deprivation. Some groups might consider themselves to be deprived with respect to their expectations even though others might not consider them to be in a state of want. Similarly, while some observers might view a particular group to be in a disadvantageous state, the group itself might be satisfied or less unhappy with its given socio-economic condition. The value expectations of a group are the average value positions to which its members believe they are justifiably entitled. While value position is the amount or level of a value actually attained, value potential refers to the capabilities that men believe they will be able to attain in the course of time. Most of the time, the latter is more important than the former in determining how people assess their capabilities.<sup>63</sup>

Members of ethnic groups do not necessarily suffer from feelings of absolute deprivation but only of relative deprivation; they compare themselves with those groups that are in a slightly more privileged position than they are. Although the material and social position of the group may have improved in absolute terms, what is of significance to them is their progress in relation to other groups.<sup>64</sup> A feeling of relative backwardness or deprivation on the part of the ethnic group, inhabiting regions that are often underdeveloped compared to the more developed core areas, gives rise to ethnic

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<sup>63</sup>Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, op.cit., p. 27

<sup>64</sup>Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 28.

protests and separatist movements aimed at rectifying their disadvantageous position.

Most of the theories seeking to explain violent collective behaviour emphasise the concept of relative deprivation, which may be related to most of the "preconditions of revolution". Theorists like Zollschan believe that all revolutionary activity begins with an exigency: a discrepancy between a consciously or unconsciously desired or expected state of affairs and an actual situation.<sup>65</sup> Similarly both Hoselitz and Willner, while bringing out differences between expectations and aspirations, contend that unrealised aspirations may produce feelings of disappointment but unfulfilled expectations result in feelings of deprivation which serve as a catalyst for revolutionary action.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>See George K. Zollschan and Walter Hirsch (eds), *Explorations in Social Change* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 264.

<sup>66</sup>Bert Hoselitz and Ann Wilner, "Economic Development, Political Strategies, and American Aid," in Mortan A. Kaplan (ed.), *The Revolution in World Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1962), p. 363.

The theory of relative deprivation is, however, not without its limitations. Even though the theory sounds plausible, its central concept is not altogether clear. For one thing, relative deprivation can manifest itself in different ways: economic, political, and social, and it is not clear which kind of deprivation is being talked about in each case, and whether its effect on political behaviour is uniform.

Second, relative deprivation theory is fundamentally atomistic. One individual's aggressive violence propensities are accorded as much weight as those of the next. Thus according to James Rule,

the logic of the theory implies that intense frustration by a few should yield rebelliousness equal to moderate frustration on the part of many, though this implication has not been pursued.<sup>67</sup>

Third, between a sense of actually feeling deprived and engaging in ways to rectify the situation, one is presupposing two conditions: a political regime that allows for political protest; and a well organised movement which can co-ordinate the efforts of the ethnic group in question to improve its relatively disadvantageous position. Since these conditions are not met in most cases, the theory of relative deprivation can only partly explain the emergence of ethnic conflicts. Furthermore, this theory seems to only account for relatively disadvantaged groups in backward peripheral areas. It does not explain why the economically prosperous provinces of the Basques and Catalonia in Spain are susceptible to ethnic strife, despite enjoying higher economic standards than the core regions of Castile and Aragon.

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<sup>67</sup>James B. Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 202.

*Internal colonialism*

A variant of the relative deprivation theory is the model of internal colonialism. Its main proponent, Michael Hechter, explains the politicisation of ethnic identities in the form of two collectivities or cultural groups: the core and the periphery. Most modern states were initially composed of two or more distinct cultural groups. In the course of their development, effective bureaucratic administrations arose in certain regions which later became the modern states of Western Europe. Each of these small core areas developed socio-economic and cultural patterns quite distinct from those in the outlying peripheral regions. As these core regions advanced economically and technologically, their political influence and control extended outwards to the eventual boundaries of the modern states.

This arrangement, produced a "cultural division of labour" in which the high status of the core region provided it with a rationale to maintain a status quo and defend the system of stratification which was heavily weighted in its favour. For members of the periphery this cultural difference became a symbol of oppression and at times a reason for mobilisation of protest for autonomy and secession of the peripheral region from the core area.<sup>68</sup>

Using this model Hechter shows how, in the sixteenth century, British state unification and British capitalism turned the peripheral regions of Ireland, Wales and Scotland into internal colonies. He explains the rise of ethnic nationalism in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, against the backdrop of British national development, as a reaction to

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<sup>68</sup>Kenneth Mc Roberts, "Internal Colonialism: The Case of Quebec," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 3, July 1979, pp. 294-95.

an exploitative industrialism and its associated hierarchical cultural division of labour. This, according to him, is reflective of the ways in which the central elites use their political and economic prowess to perpetuate the subordination and impoverishment of peripheral populations.

According to Hechter, "national development is a process which may be said to occur when the separate cultural identities of regions begin to lose social significance, and become blurred."<sup>69</sup> It assumes that the establishment of one national culture would merge the core and periphery into an all encompassing cultural system to which all members of the society have primary identification and loyalty.

He refers to two models of national development of which the second is one of internal colonialism. The internal colonialism model provides an adequate explanation of the persistence of ethnic identity among peripheral groups in complex societies. This model advances the view that instead of leading to social structural convergence from increased core-periphery contact, industrialisation results in an unequal distribution of wealth and power among various groups of which the superordinate group, or core, seeks to monopolise its advantages through policies which aim to institutionalise the existing stratification system (also termed cultural division of labour) which results in distinctive ethnic identification in the two groups. The process of acculturation does not occur because it is in the interest of the core group to retain some sort of cultural superiority over the

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<sup>69</sup>Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism - The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 5.

periphery. Similarly, even in the economic sphere, the peripheral economy is dependent on and complementary to that of the core.

Another scholar, Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, described internal colonialism as a phenomenon that

corresponds to a structure of social relations based on the domination and exploitation among culturally heterogeneous, distinct groups. If it has a specific difference with respect to other relations based on superordination, it inheres in the cultural heterogeneity which the conquest of some peoples by others historically produces.<sup>70</sup>

He traces the roots of internal colonialism to the great independence movements of the old colonies, a carry-over from the colonial times. With the end of colonial rule and the creation of new independent nation-states, there arose a need for a professional educated class, entrepreneurs, skilled craftsmen and capital to help the new state carry out its administrative functions. Gradually, the domination of foreigners over natives was replaced by the domination and exploitation of natives by the natives themselves.<sup>71</sup> Thus while the end of colonialism marked the end of colonial rule, it did not stop the oppression by some groups of the others.

Though the theory of internal colonialism brings out the nature of a plural society quite effectively, it suffers from many limitations. First, there is a problem of spelling out the number and degree of variables of dependence which must be present for a particular area to be designated an internal colony.<sup>72</sup> For example, if one of the conditions is that the region suffers from lack of services and depends on a single primary resource - agricultural or mineral - then the case of Scotland does not fit the model. Hechter recently recognised the need to amend the model

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<sup>70</sup>Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, "Internal Colonialism and National Development," *Comparative International Development*, Vol. 1, 1965, p. 33.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>72</sup>See Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, op. cit., p. 33.



to take account of an alternative system of the division of labour, the segmental type, in which members interact wholly within the boundaries of their own group and as a result "group members monopolise certain niches in the occupational structure."<sup>73</sup>

Second, the internal colonial model does not explain why it was only toward the end of the last century that Celtic nationalism assumed political form. Even if one takes industrialisation to be the cause, one still cannot say why Welsh and Scottish nationalism gained political support in the 1960s and not before or after the Second World War. Hechter explains this by using the theory of relative deprivation, which is ambiguous as already discussed above, and also modifies the

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<sup>73</sup>See Hechter and Levi, "The Comparative Analysis of Ethnoregional Movements," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 3, 1979, pp. 263.

economic basis of his argument in favour of political factors, that is, the state policies as the basis of separatism and ethno-nationalism .

Third, internal colonialism focuses mainly on ethnic regions in metropolitan states that constitute the core of modern capitalism. According to Anthony Smith, the model possesses little relevance for non-western areas like Middle East or Africa, where, despite some western commercial penetration, there was little capitalism or industry at the moment when ethnic nationalism emerged. Yet in some regions where there was rapid economic development and educational expansion - Ibo, Baganda and Karen are examples - ethnic nationalism emerged as forcibly as in more depressed and backward areas.<sup>74</sup>

Fourth, it is not clear why, according to the model, social discontent in depressed and dependent regions need assume ethnic form and content. If this were the case, then depressed regions in ethnically homogeneous states like the north of England, or backward regions within a plural state like the South of Italy, should also have been embroiled in ethnic strife. Thus it is clear that even though it was believed for a long time that economic growth would diminish ethnic antagonisms and bring about cultural assimilation, the experiences of ethnic groups like Catalans, Uzbeks and Tajiks, who have enjoyed higher living standards than their neighbours, disprove the above theory. While economic decline may exacerbate ethnic differences in some cases, the ethnic factor may operate quite independently of the economic differentials in some instances. The main limitations of the model is that while it

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<sup>74</sup>Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival*, op. cit., p. 33.

illuminates economic relationships of the ethnic groups, it overlooks other attributes and so obscures the independent causal force of ethnicity despite rapid economic change.

According to Kenneth McRoberts, if not applied carefully, the core-periphery model can also lead to two other forms of distortions: a type of cultural holism and failure to assign proper weight to cultural divisions of labour.<sup>75</sup> He maintains that however well the core-periphery distinction may characterise the aggregate relations between regions, it cannot fully define the position of individuals within each of the regions. Second, cultural division of labour does not have to be fully coterminous with the division between regions. Individuals from the core could be sent to the peripheral areas and *vice versa*. This experience of being a minority within a culturally alien core could produce a much more intense attachment to the independence of the periphery than would have been produced either by core-periphery inter-regional relations or by ethnic stratification within the periphery. These distinctions are critical to the understanding of autonomist movements but the model of internal colonialism appears to explain the cultural division of labour only in a limiting case where two regions, locked in a core-periphery relationship, are each composed exclusively of members of a single culture.<sup>76</sup>

### *Theory of Cultural Pluralism*

The theory of cultural pluralism was first developed by J. S. Furnivall from his colonial experience in South East Asia, where the coexistence

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<sup>75</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Internal Colonialism: The Case of Quebec," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 3, July 1979, p. 295.

<sup>76</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

of indigenous Asian, immigrant Asian, and European populations within the same political unit led him to emphasise their cultural distinctiveness in a pluralistic state. Furnivall believed that the political form of the plural society is one of colonial domination in which the Western superstructure of business and administration is imposed on the native world bringing a forced union of the different sections of the population.<sup>77</sup> This union is in the strictest sense a medley of peoples living with each other

for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market place, in buying and selling.<sup>78</sup>

Furnivall emphasises the importance of economic factors which act as determinants, creating and maintaining the plural society in situations of cultural and social diversity under colonial domination. Integration of various groups is not based on a voluntary consensus but is imposed by the colonial power and the force of economic circumstances. Furnivall's plural society is characterised therefore by "cultural divergence, the limitation of cross-cultural contacts to economic relations, economic specialisation by cultural sectors (an ethnic division of labour), a lack of shared values, and the absence of common will."<sup>79</sup> Such a society is held together by dint of the force supplied by the colonial power.

The same theory has been further refined by M.G. Smith, who also sees plural societies as characterised by cultural diversity but uses a

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<sup>77</sup>J.S. Furnivall, "Some Problems of Tropical Economy," in Rita Hinden (ed), *Fabian Colonial Essays* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1945), p. 68.

<sup>78</sup>J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 304.

<sup>79</sup>J.S. Furnivall, "Some Problems of Tropical Economy," op. cit., pp. 161-84.

different theoretical framework to explain the concept of a plural society. According to Smith, cultural pluralism consists of the coexistence within a single society of groups possessing "mutually incompatible" institutional systems like social structures, value and belief patterns and systems of action. A society is deemed culturally plural only when there is a formal diversity in the basic system of compulsory institutions.<sup>80</sup>

The main thrust of Smith's theory of cultural pluralism is as follows. First, populations that contain groups practising different forms of institutional system exhibit a corresponding diversity of cultural, social, and ideological patterns. Since "any institutional system tends toward internal integration and consistency, each of these differentiated groups will tend to form a closed socio-cultural unit."<sup>81</sup> Second, where culturally divergent groups together form a common society, the imperative for maintenance of this inclusive unit involves a type of political order in which one of the cultural sections is subordinated to the other.<sup>82</sup> Since a society needs a "community of values,"<sup>83</sup> it is believed that a society embracing groups displaying wide cultural differences can only be held together through subordination. According to Smith,

Given the fundamental differences of belief, value, and organisation that connote pluralism, the monopoly of power by one cultural section is the essential precondition for the maintenance of the total society in its current form.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>M.G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 82.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>82</sup> M.G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 86.

Third, plural societies are "defined by dissensus and pregnant with conflict..."<sup>85</sup> and this conflict arises out of the basic cultural incompatibility which is at the heart of the instability that threatens a plural society.

According to Smith, a society is a plural society when one cultural section dominates the others; if each functioned independently of the another, then each would constitute a separate society and there would be no source of conflict. Thus where there is ethnic pluralism, there is a strong tendency toward domination by one of the groups.<sup>86</sup> This propensity to dominate arises from the incompatibility of institutions and values among the groups. In Smith's analysis, cultural pluralism is the major determinant of the structure of a plural society and is as prominent as economic forces in Furnivall's analysis.

This theory of cultural pluralism which seeks to explain the conditions of instability in a plural society does not, however, take into consideration those institutions and beliefs that are held in common by the members of a plural society, and which could help in diminishing rather than fostering conflict. Cultural pluralism automatically imposes the structural necessity for domination by one of the cultural sections, excluding the prospect of consensus or integration between the various groups. The theory also fails to look into political variables such as leadership and envisages the entire

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. xiii.

<sup>86</sup>Smith, "Some Developments in The Analytic Framework of Pluralism," in Kuper and Smith (eds), *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 434.

interaction of groups only in cultural terms.<sup>87</sup> It neglects the role of elites, particularly those with convergent goals and aspirations. Finally, the biggest failing of the cultural pluralist theory is that it does not explain why there is so much ethnic conflict among strata of those groups that are culturally and socially most similar.

It can be seen from the foregoing that no one theory is adequate to describe an ethnic situation in its entirety. In fact, most ethnic situations, at a given point of time, relate to more than one model. All these theories need to be studied in conjunction with one another as none of them can be applied independently. Thus while laying the theoretical framework for this study, an attempt will be made to draw upon a number of theories and variables, which at best explain an ethnic situation at a given point of time, but do not provide a comprehensive and complete analysis of any movement.

This work would seek to examine the rise and growth of separatists movements within the framework of three main variables: (i) the nature of the movement, (ii) the response of the state and (iii) patterns and levels of external support. The nature of the movement remains contingent on a variety of factors like historical/cultural genesis; degree of political mobilisation and organisation of strength. The course of the movement is also influenced by the leadership patterns and the role of elites. While the movements may rise for a variety of reasons including social economic variables and political factors, the state, however, remains central in both providing the initial impetus for political mobilisation and responding to ethnic challenges.

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<sup>87</sup>Leo Despres, "The Implications of Nationalist Politics in British Guiana for the Development of Cultural Theory," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 66, October 1964, pp. 1051-77.

The response of the state in accommodating the legitimate demands of ethnic group becomes a crucial factor in exacerbating as well as defusing a movement. The state formulates its strategies to deal with the ethnic challenge either through an assimilative or an integrative framework. The assimilative framework may succeed in quelling the movement in the short run but tends to stimulate rather than suppress ethno-nationalism in the long run. The integrated framework, premised on partial accommodation of ethnic group's demands, is generally more effective in defusing the conflict. However, within either framework the state may use a variety of strategies ranging from co-optation to conciliation or/and confrontation to coercion.

To the extent that the demands and aspirations of the ethnic groups are accommodated through open democratic processes the ethnic threat gets receded. Whether ethnic assertions remain dormant or become more militant depends upon the state and its capability to accommodate the demands of the ethnic groups. The inability of the state to respond to the ethnic challenge exacerbate conflicts between the state and the contending group(s). If conciliatory policies are adopted at an early stage, there are better chances of defusing the ethnic conflict.

The ethnic conflicts, however, could tend to become more intractable if the demands for access to political power and greater autonomy do not receive sensitive or timely attention. The use of the coercive power of the state against resurgent ethno-nationalism often pushes the aggrieved groups to the extreme path of political violence and in some cases a bid for secession. Secessionist movements which challenge the integrity of the state are invariably met by the state through coercion and repression.



Secession is difficult to achieve because the might of the state is generally greater than that of separatists groups. The state may, however, find it difficult to overcome their resistance if the separatists groups are able to secure external support, both moral and material - in the form of finance, weaponry training and providing safe sanctuaries for insurgence - which helps them to sustain their challenge to the state. The involvement of the external powers is contingent of a variety of factors: kinship linkages, geo-strategic location, and capabilities of the adversaries. External intervention not only encourages separatist ambitions but also sustain prolonged conflict. However, the failure of the external powers to meet the expectations of the ethnic groups for a variety of reasons including international reactions on negative domestic opinion, economic compulsion, and lack of timely support can lead to the visible decline of the movements.

This work subscribes to the model that while the ethnic movements may be triggered off by a number of factors which create the conditions for rise and growth of separatism, these generally either survive or fade away to the extent that they are shaped by the respective state policies and sustained by external support. Before moving to the specific case studies, this theoretical framework will be applied to the rise of separatism in South Asia as a whole.

## Chapter 2

### ETHNICITY AND NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA

The process of nation-building has proved to be very complex and intractable in South Asia. There are many similarities in the cultural and political structures of South Asian countries. Most of them are multi-ethnic, plural societies which have faced challenges of varying degrees and intensity to their national integrity. Legacies of colonial rule have made the process of nation-building even more difficult. Yet despite the commonalities, each country developed its own pattern of governance after achieving independence from colonial rule. This chapter seeks to examine the causes of ethno-nationalism in the region and the effect of policies adopted by different states in the post-colonial era. An effort will also be made to analyse why some countries in the region have been more successful than others in addressing the concerns of their respective ethnic groups.

With a view to better understanding the situation in South Asia, several movements are discussed, albeit briefly. These are of the Muhajirs and Sindhis in Pakistan; the Chakmas in Bangladesh; the Tamils in Sri Lanka; and the Kashmir and North-east insurgencies in India. The movements shed light on the response of the state in South Asia, both comparatively and collectively. For example, the tribal problems of the Chakmas in Bangladesh, the North-east in India, and the Baluch in South-west Pakistan are indicative of the problems encountered by the respective states in integrating the tribes into the national framework. Similarly the Kashmir imbroglio and

the presence of organisations such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka exemplify the salience of the external linkages in the region; while at the inter-state level, the case studies of the Sindhis and Muhajirs provide valuable insights into the workings of the Pakistani federal state in relation to other ethnic communities such as the Baluch.

Against the background of the previous chapter, a number of theories have been applied in explaining these movements. For instance, the model of internal colonialism has been used to study the ethnic behaviour of the Sindhis, Baluch and Pakistan's former East Bengal, while the relative deprivation theory has been used to explain the case of the Baluch in Pakistan.

#### *Nation-building in South Asia*

The process of nation-building in Third World countries has been made more complex by the onerous task of integrating heterogeneous ethnic groups into the mainstream of national politics. This is partly because most of these countries gained independence from colonial rule without having completed the process of nation formation. As newly independent nations, these countries had little choice but to follow an ideal, universalised model of the nation-state: a model that had been perfected by the European nation-states themselves through "wars, bloody nationalist revolutions and colonisation."<sup>1</sup> No other identity than that of a nation-state was recognised in the international order for the emerging independent states in Asia and Africa.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.L. Sheth, "State Nation and Ethnicity: Experience of Third World Countries," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, no. 12, 25 March 1989, p. 622.

<sup>2</sup>D.L. Sheth, *op. cit.*, p. 622.

It may be pointed out that European states themselves took several centuries to emerge as modern nation-states. They had also evolved a gradualist approach towards creating a stable state system, based on the principle of national self-determination, experiencing several phases of turbulence in the process of development. Even today, some of these nations face problems of varying magnitudes, as illustrated by the festering problem of northern Ireland in United Kingdom and the unresolved problem of Quebec in Canada. The task of nation-building in the less developed countries has thus been rendered more difficult by the need to compress the process into a few decades, and without "having the time to go through various sequences and stages as the Western developed nations could."<sup>3</sup>

In the event, most Third World states have been confronted with the task of establishing political, social and economic institutions as well as the problem of forging a cohesive nationalism by accommodating the diverse and heterogeneous populations within their boundaries. The task has not been easy, but it has been made even more difficult by the unwillingness or inability, or both, of the majority groups to recognise the legitimate particularist demands of the minority groups. Once these countries achieved independence, most ethnic majorities, which had upheld the principle of self-determination in the course of their national struggles, were quick to renounce the principle in their eagerness to achieve national integration. Claims for autonomy and the preservation of a distinct way of life put forward by the minority groups were seen as secessionist moves and generally suppressed with ruthless zeal.

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<sup>3</sup>Baladas Ghoshal, "South Asian Security Dynamics: Domestic and Internal Factors: The Case of India," in Iftekharuzzaman (ed.), *South Asia Security: Primacy of International Dimension* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1995), p. 5.

South Asia, comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Nepal, like the rest of the Third World, is confronted with a wide range of internal challenges. According to one estimate, of the ethnic groups in the world which have demanded or are demanding separate provinces within the same country, or greater autonomy for their existing provinces, or a separate, secessionist state, 77 percent are located in Asia and Africa and the remaining 23 percent are in Europe and North America.<sup>4</sup> South Asia seems to have a large share of these movements. Despite different regime patterns, the general trend in almost all the countries has been towards an expansion of state control and increasing centralisation. A proclivity towards violence is yet another feature of South Asian states, where poverty, illiteracy, rapid population growth, and narcotics contribute substantially towards the rise of militancy. The presence of the "external factor" has also helped to sustain the movements over longer periods of time.

### *The rise of ethno-nationalism in South Asia*

#### *Structure of pre-colonial societies*

The rise of ethno-nationalism in South Asia can be attributed to the nature of pre-colonial societies and the impact of colonial rule upon them. The historical legacy and structure of the pre-colonial South Asian societies has had a profound influence on the demands and struggles of the ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup> For example, the claim of pre-colonial Tamil separatists in Northern Sri Lanka provides a certain legitimacy

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<sup>4</sup> Inayatullah, *Politics of Ethnicity and Separatism in South Asia* (Lahore: Centre for South Asian Studies, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Inayatullah, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

to their claim for a Tamil Eelam in what they term their traditional homeland. Similar claims to a historical ethnic homeland can be seen among other ethno-nationalists in South Asia including the Sikhs in India; Baluch and Pushtuns in Pakistan; and Chakmas in Bangladesh. Pre-colonial tribal or feudal structures of some societies have also been a source of conflict between states in South Asia, and amongst some ethnic groups who feel threatened by the state and other groups. Sometimes the post-colonial state has encroached on the traditional autonomy and privileges of groups which even the colonial powers did not disturb. This has led to demands for autonomy or independence from movements like those in North-eastern India and the Baluch movement in Pakistan.

*Impact of colonial rule on the post-colonial state*

The policies of the colonial rulers were carried over by the new independent states, providing a fertile ground for the rise of ethno-nationalism in the post-colonial era. The movement for independence from colonial rule created a temporary but essentially fragile unity among divergent ethnic groups; when anti-colonial nationalist fervour declined, their differences came to the surface.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the anti-colonial struggle in Ceylon, which was moderate, did not weld the two ethnic communities together, although there was some temporary unity among the Sinhalese and Tamil elite. In India too, the nationalist movement was mass-based, but it failed to bridge the widening gap between Hindus and Muslims.

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<sup>6</sup>Inayatullah, op. cit., p. 25.

Language, culture, religion and ethnicity of the minorities were handled by the newly independent South Asian states in much the same way as their colonial predecessors had manipulated such forces or ignored them in constructing their colonial systems. According to Ross Mallick, "the post-colonial state is actually the colonial state with new rulers."<sup>7</sup> He describes the post-colonial state as an amalgam of colonial legacies and Western values, existing uneasily with local cultures, and regards the recent upsurge of ethnic sentiments as a throwback to the colonial era.<sup>8</sup>

The policy of centralising the pre-colonial states and putting them into a political and administrative straitjacket, regardless of their ethnic and religious identities, mobilised the separatist ambitions of many groups. For example, the new state of Bangladesh, founded on a strong linguistic identity, tried to integrate the Buddhist and non-Bengali-speaking tribal minority into the Muslim Bengali culture leading to a violent clash between the tribal guerrillas and the Bangladesh army in 1976.

Added to this, uneven development resulting from the policies of the colonial powers led to the less-developed areas clamouring for a greater share in development. The colonial powers' preferential treatment of certain ethnic groups over others - for control and stability in military-bureaucratic structures - led to an imbalance *vis-a-vis* other groups. For example, the prominent positions of Tamils in the Sri Lankan bureaucracy, and of the Punjabis, and to some extent the Pushtuns, in Pakistan's military establishment, led to a feeling of

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<sup>7</sup>Ross Mallick, *Development, Ethnicity and Human Rights* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1980), p. 338.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 339.

discrimination among other communities. Rectification of these grievances became the basis of demands of the movements in East Pakistan and Sindh.

*The state in South Asia*

The state remains central in both creating and responding to ethnic challenges. According to one Ghoshal,

It all depends on how a state manages its developmental problems. Depending upon the state's capability to accommodate the grievances of ethnic groups, these assertions fluctuate from dormancy to militancy.<sup>9</sup>

Although the levels of ethnic dissonance, intensity of ethno-national challenges, and the state's response have varied from country to country, all states in South Asian have found such challenges difficult to manage. The two major policy frameworks within which a state operates are (i) assimilative and (ii) integrative. The first is premised upon the incorporation of the identity or identities of the subordinate groups into the larger national identity through promotion or imposition of a common "national" language, religion and culture, in either a unitary or a federal framework. Where the dominant ethnic group controlling the state structure is disproportionately strong and other subordinate groups are weak the policy may succeed in the short run, but it may stimulate rather than suppress ethno-nationalism in the long run.<sup>10</sup>

The integrative policy framework is essentially a partial accommodation of various ethnic groups using varying degrees of

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<sup>9</sup>Baladas Ghoshal, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>10</sup>Inayatullah, op. cit., p. 19.



coercion. The elite from the dominant ethnic group insists that the subordinate ethnic groups accept the major symbols or premises of the larger political community while retaining a certain degree of cultural and political autonomy and control over their resources.<sup>11</sup> Such a policy works best when the level of ethno-nationalism is not high and there is a federal system in which each federating unit has the power to protect its cultural traits.

According to Inayatullah, the choice of policy framework, assimilative or integrative, is a function of

the peculiar historical development of the society in question, the nature of regimes, the political orientation of the elite holding power in these regimes, their perception of the nature of internal threat to the unity of the society emerging from ethnic diversity.<sup>12</sup>

For instance, military regimes and civilian authoritarian regimes having centralised and unitary structures are generally disposed to adopt assimilative policies, while non-military and democratic regimes tend to decentralise power and adopt integrative policies.

#### *Response of the state*

Within either framework, the response of the state may vary from indifference to accommodation, substitution-manipulation, coercion and repression.<sup>13</sup> The first response, indifference, is usually the result of a lack of understanding of ethno-nationalism, political myopia or sheer ignorance. The second accommodates the demands of politicised ethnic groups for an equal partnership in the system. This

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>Inayatullah, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

approach is usually employed to freeze the politicisation of ethnicity before it moves to the stage of secessionism. A substitutive-manipulative response is an effort to persuade ethnic groups to reduce their demands in exchange for something else, but may become manipulative if ethnic groups are tricked into giving up their claims for something insignificant.

Most of South Asia, with the notable exception of India is ethnically centralised. In India, the central body politic comprises many groups but no one group is dominant.<sup>14</sup> The rest of South Asia is characterised by "few groups large enough as to have the issue and extent of their interaction being a constant theme of politics at the centre."<sup>15</sup> In such systems the centre is not a neutral arbiter but a focal point of competition.<sup>16</sup> For example, in post-1971 Pakistan, the ethnic centrality of the Punjabis remains unaltered, but the multiplicity of other groups in the centralised ethnic system has provided the dominant group with greater clout and less vulnerability. In Sri Lanka, a sizeable Tamil population in the North and the North-east of the country and its cultural affinity with the Tamils of Tamil Nadu, have led to a self-perceived minority complex among the Sinhalese community.<sup>17</sup>

The ruling elite's initial reluctance or failure to decentralise political and economic authority and encourage cultural plurality tends to exacerbate the inherent ethno-national contradictions in South Asia.

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<sup>14</sup>One might believe that the dominant group is the Hindus, but this is a very broad category subsuming many other subgroups. See Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nationbuilding in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup>Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 39-40.

<sup>17</sup>Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

The use of the coercive power of the state to preserve regime interests against resurgent sub-nationalism pushes the aggrieved groups to the extreme path of political violence and in, some cases, secessionism. Having described state strategies for dealing with minorities in South Asia in broad terms, the strategies of each state, in dealing with movements that continue to challenge the centrality of the state, are discussed below.

### **India**

The ethnic mosaic of India is truly awesome. It has many cultural markers for group identity such as race, religion, tribe, caste, and language. According to some analysts, India is not a nation-state but a "developing multi-national state."<sup>18</sup> The basic postulate for this argument is that there is a distinction between "political integration of diverse peoples through politics, policies, procedures and institutions, and national integration through assimilation of diverse peoples to a common national culture."<sup>19</sup> India, according to Brass, has followed pluralistic policies in relation to various linguistic, religious and other minorities to develop workable means to maintain "political unity in the world's most culturally diverse country."<sup>20</sup> Electoral politics has helped in the gradual penetration of shared values and practices into increasing segments and recesses of society.

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<sup>18</sup>Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), p. 168.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>20</sup>Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

As Hoffman has put it,

The future of Indian integration lies in the continuation, widening and reinforcing of what exists now. And that is a sense of national unity or integration that arises and is maintained by continued bargaining, consensus building, arbitration, mediation and intensive group interaction taking place within a loose framework of democratic formal rules and informal norms.<sup>21</sup>

India's efforts at nation-building may be regarded as one of the more successful attempts by a state, particularly in view of the size and diversity of the country. It has sought to promote national integration by reconciling culturally pluralistic demands through a democratic political system. Under Nehru, a consensual system evolved in which a balance was sought between various factions. The Congress was able to convert itself into a "party of consensus", dominating the whole political landscape and enjoying wide legitimacy.<sup>22</sup> Its task became even more pressing in the wake of the partition of the country in 1947 and the ensuing violence, as well as the task of integrating more than 500 Indian states into the Indian union.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the federating units or states were assigned administrative tasks and autonomy but within the purview of a centre which could turn unitary during situations of "emergency" as interpreted by it.<sup>24</sup>

These will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4 but suffice it to state at this point, and as argued by Ramesh Thakur, the constitutional bias in favour of the centre in India is all too evident

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<sup>21</sup>Steven Hoffoman, "Social Psychology, Policy and National Integration in India," in Israel Milton (ed.), *National Unity: The South Asian Experience* (New Delhi: Promila Publishers, 1983), p. 110.

<sup>22</sup>Rajni Kothari, "The Congress System in India," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, no. 12, December 1964, pp. 1161-73. Also see Stanley A. Kochenack, *The Congress Party of India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) and Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

<sup>23</sup>Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>24</sup>Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 87. The constitution of India provides for three different kinds of emergencies. It could be imposed due to war, external aggression and armed rebellion; failure of constitutional machinery in the states; and financial crisis.

not only in the provision to dismiss state legislatures, but in the financial dependence of the states on the centre; the centralised bureaucratic, police and judicial services; lack of dual citizenship; and the centralised nature of major political parties in the country.<sup>25</sup>

### *Strategies of the Indian state*

The Indian state has employed several means to cope with the challenges of nation building. It has adopted preferential policies for the backward groups and other constitutional measures for various minorities.<sup>26</sup> Reorganisation of states on linguistic and tribal criteria also underlined the Indian state's recognition of its vast ethnic diversity. The adoption of a multilingual policy at the centre and linguistic reorganisation of states has also facilitated the consolidation of a process of dual nationalism, a recognition of most Indians as members of two nations; a Sikh, Bengali or Tamil nation at one level of identity and an Indian nation at another.<sup>27</sup> In fact, it is this multiplicity of groups that has enabled the Indian state to deal with one conflict at a time and, to the extent possible, contain it locally. This contributes to its image as an arbiter of the claims of various ethnic communities and unlike, say, Pakistan, it is not seen as an actor in the conflicts.

The success of India in forging a multi-national state can be explained by several factors. According to Marshall Bouton, democracy provided

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<sup>25</sup>Ramesh Thakur, *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995), p. 73.

<sup>26</sup> For details on affirmative policies towards the religious minorities, backward castes and scheduled castes and tribes see Partha S. Ghosh, "Positive Discrimination in India: A Political Analysis," *Ethnic Studies Report*, Vol. 15, no. 2, July 1997, pp. 135-69.

<sup>27</sup>Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* op. cit., p. 169.

a highly effective alternative for disgruntled regions and groups to extremism and violence. When a group's demands were accommodated their stake in the political process led them to "buy in."<sup>28</sup> For instance, New Delhi's policy of not imposing Hindi as the official language effectively blunted rising Tamil nationalism. The victory of the Tamil regional party, Dravida Munnetra Kazagam, (DMK) in 1967 resulted in the amendment of the Language Act under which English would continue to serve as the official language of India until all non-Hindi speaking states agreed to switch over to Hindi.

Despite increasing stresses and strains, India has also been able to maintain its essentially secular framework. As some analysts have put it,

Despite the long strides made by the forces of Hindutva, the heterogeneity of Indian and 'Hindu' society has continued to be a formidable obstacle in the way of triumph of religiously based majoritarianism.<sup>29</sup>

Another factor that has kept the state intact is the dynamism of Indian federalism. India's federal system has generally encouraged negotiation, compromise and co-operation. This has been particularly evident in the North-east where Delhi has sought to accommodate demands for autonomy, and co-opted ethnic movements amidst rising violence. The Indian government's extension of administration to the outlying tribal areas - under loose control during British India - was largely perceived by the indigenous population as a ploy to destroy their tribal culture and traditions. The

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<sup>28</sup>Marshall Bouton, "India's Problem is not Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, no. 3, May-June 1998, p. 86.

<sup>29</sup>Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia - History, Culture, Political Economy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 228.

unsettled situation in the North-east is a product of deep-rooted political and economic factors. Crisis of identity, cross-border ethnic links, and support of external powers not only sustain the irredentist fervour in the area but also make for insurrection for secession from India.

### *North-east*

Unlike Bangladesh and to some extent Pakistan, Indian strategy towards its tribal communities has remained "firm and yet accommodative, coercive as also persuasive, inclusionary and not exclusionary."<sup>30</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, when the Nagas and the Mizos resorted to full-scale insurrections for independence, the centre responded by creating a separate state of Nagaland in 1963 and gave Mizoram union territory status in 1972. When the Mizo National Front (MNF)<sup>31</sup> pursued its aim of achieving an independent Mizoram, on the basis of a forceful blend of tribalism and Christianity, and charges of economic neglect, a negotiated settlement was reached.<sup>32</sup> In June 1986, the centre agreed to accord statehood to Mizoram after the MNF agreed to end insurgency. Laldenga, the rebel leader, took over the new government as chief minister in August 1986. Though it still constitutes a security threat, like all tribal communities bordering other countries, Naga insurgency has been losing much of its steam. Similarly, the 1988 Accord with the Tripura National Volunteers has tempered the insurgency in Tripura,

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<sup>30</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p.164.

<sup>31</sup>For details on the MNF ideology see B.B. Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A Study of Politicisation of Culture* (Jaipur: Aalekh Publication, 1979), pp. 149-51.

<sup>32</sup>For details see C. Narayana Rao, "Crisis in Mizoram," in B.L. Abbi (ed.), *North East Region: Problems and Prospects of Development* (Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, 1984), pp. 240-48.

although the situation is not fully settled. In Manipur, the situation is more volatile, with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) working for liberation of the Manipur valley.<sup>33</sup>

Assam presents yet another picture of centre-periphery accommodation in the North-east, and conforms to the internal colonialism model. It perceives itself as the victim of the massive inflow of non-Assamese, mainly east Bengali immigrants,<sup>34</sup> which has led to increasing alienation of land, loss of employment opportunities, and economic hardships for the Assamese population,<sup>35</sup> who are fast becoming a minority in their own homeland. With low literacy rates and a per capita income that did not compare well with other states, the Assamese blamed their persisting underdevelopment on the influx of outsiders and the unresponsiveness of the centre.

Almost 62 percent of the personnel in the state service are non-Assamese while in the central services Assamese make up only 10 percent of total employees.<sup>36</sup> Feelings of economic discrimination are also widespread given the fact that, despite being the largest supplier of crude oil, tea and plywood, Assam receives very little as its share of royalties from the centre. But again, after protracted negotiations,

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<sup>33</sup>M.K. Narayanan, "National Security: The International Dimension," *Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies*, Paper no.16, 1994, pp. 19-21.

<sup>34</sup>To study the flow of migrants and the demographic transformation of Assam see Atul Goswami and Jayanta Kumar Gogoi, "Migration and Demographic Transformation of Assam -1901-1971," in B.L. Abbi (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 60-80.

<sup>35</sup>This includes Assamese language speakers who in 1980 constituted 59 percent of the population of Assam, but the situation is complicated by the fact that the small minority includes Muslim immigrants and descendants from Bangladesh, making it a less homogeneous group.

<sup>36</sup>Jyotindra Das Gupta, "Ethnicity, Democracy, and Development in India: Assam in a General Perspective," in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy - An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 157.



following the Assam accord<sup>37</sup> which contained an agreement on the cut-off year for the grant of legal residence to the "foreigners", the Assam Gana Parishad, which had spearheaded the agitation, formed the government. According to Phadnis, "the victory of the Assam Gana Parishad provided the centre some respite to the extent its strategies had worked to keep the local issues localised as much as possible."<sup>38</sup> The concessions were essentially symbolic but the accord served both parties equally.<sup>39</sup> Assam now presents a picture of relative stability, notwithstanding the fact that in the past few years a more radical organisation, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), comprising insurgent groups from the North-east, is waging an armed struggle for the liberation of Assam.

The Indian government's ability to quell insurgencies has also been demonstrated in Punjab which has returned to normalcy after a decade of sustained violence. The case of Punjab will be discussed extensively in the subsequent chapters.

This is, however, not to suggest that Indian democracy is without its flaws. In fact, many of the contemporary challenges in India can be traced to gradual undermining of the essential synthesis and tolerance of Indian pluralism. Strains in centre-state relations have resulted partly from the in-built centrist bias in the Indian constitution and

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<sup>37</sup>The accord was signed between Indian Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and leaders of the Assam movement on 15 August 1985. Under the accord, illegal migrants who entered the state between January 1966 and March 1971 would be disenfranchised for ten years and those who came after March 1971 would be deported. For details on negotiations leading to the accord, see Sanjib Baruah, "Immigration, Ethnic Conflict, and Political Turmoil - Assam, 1979-85," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, no.11, November 1986, pp. 1190-1205.

<sup>38</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Also see Sanjib Baruah, "Lessons of Assam," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 21, no. 7, 15 February 1986, pp. 282-84.

<sup>39</sup>Jyotindra Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

partly from the functioning of the political processes,<sup>40</sup> which have tended to reinforce the unitarian tendencies of the Indian federal organisation. Although in the initial decades of independence Congress was able to counter the centralised politics of predominantly linguistic regionalism, increasing recourse to "covert authoritarianism" and the failure of the state to redress economic inequalities and social injustice led to deepening tensions between the centre and different regional nuclei of power.<sup>41</sup>

The advent of non-Congress governments in various states in 1967 was followed by the first signs of discontent with the existing framework of centre-state relations and the demand for greater autonomy for the states. This period coincided with the prime-ministership of Mrs Gandhi, under whom, as noted by Ramesh Thakur, "Congress became the mechanism for centralising and exacerbating conflicts instead of attenuating and reconciling them."<sup>42</sup> Demands for state-level autonomy, often portrayed as "threats to national integrity," provided a justification for the centre to impose its direct rule in the states, thus aggravating regional tensions.

In his study on the crisis of governability in India, Atul Kohli points to four variables that may have influenced the nature of political change in the country: deinstitutionalising the role of national and regional leaders; the impact of weak political parties; undisciplined

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<sup>40</sup>The Legislative, administrative and financial arrangements are heavily weighted in favour of the central government. The residuary power vested in the centre for transfer of functions from the state list to the Union list, administrative clout in the use of emergency powers to impose president's rule, and immense fiscal powers have all strengthened the centre's claims over the states.

<sup>41</sup>Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, op. cit., p. 224.

<sup>42</sup>Ramesh Thakur, *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), p. 349.

political mobilisation of various caste, ethnic, religious, and other types of groups; and increasing conflicts between the haves and have-nots in the civil society.<sup>43</sup> There is no doubt that next to political party alliances, caste loyalty is a significant determinant of electoral outcomes. Of late, the rise of Hindu fundamentalism has also deepened the communal division between the Hindus and Muslims, posing a serious challenge to the secular foundations of the Indian state. The situation in Kashmir reflects this dilemma and has to be seen as part of this broader dimension of Indian politics.

### *Kashmir*

Kashmir poses a serious challenge to the secular make-up of India being the only Muslim-dominated state in the country. New Delhi does not want to let Kashmir go because if it were to secede, it would undermine the very basis of the plural and secular nature of the Indian state. A product of partition, over which two major wars were fought in 1948 and 1965, it remains a major bone of contention between India and Pakistan. The area held by India comprises the Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh (roughly 45 percent of the territory); while Pakistan controls Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas (35 percent); and China the Aksai region in North-east Ladakh (20 percent).

Jammu and Kashmir was one of three princely states not to accede to either India or Pakistan after the British granted independence to India. The Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, however,

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<sup>43</sup>Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 387.

signed the Instrument of Accession dated 26 October 1947 and requested India to defend the state against the tribal invasion from the Frontier tribesmen of Pakistan. India regards the Instrument of Accession as legal, final and irrevocable and considers Kashmir an integral part of the country. Pakistan, on the other hand, contests this claim and believes that a UN sponsored plebiscite should be held to determine the wishes of the people of Kashmir.<sup>44</sup> The dispute centres essentially around the valley region which, as evident from Table 2.1, is predominantly Muslim, as opposed to Jammu and Ladakh which have a larger concentration of Hindus and Buddhists respectively.

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<sup>44</sup>The accession was at that time conditional on a plebiscite but the offer was retracted by Nehru in 1954 when Pakistan joined the Western-sponsored South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). Pakistan has since viewed this as a breach of faith and there is a feeling in some quarters that the plebiscite was not held because India refused to withdraw its forces from Kashmir and because it felt that it could not win the people's vote. See Ghulam Nabi Fai, "The Plebiscite Solution for Kashmir When and How," in Raju G.C. Thomas (ed.), *Perspectives on Kashmir; The Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 168-74.

Table 2.1 <sup>45</sup> Population of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1981(a)

Region	Population % of State Population	% Muslims	% Hindus	% others
Kashmir Valley	3, 134, 904 52.36%	94.96	4.59	0.05
Jammu	2, 718, 113 45.39%	29.60	66.25	4.15
Ladakh	134, 372 2.24%	46.04	2.66	51.30 (Buddhist)
Total State	5,987,389	64.19	32.24	3.57
	100.00 %			

a 1991 Census figures are not available

Given the particular circumstances of Kashmir's accession to India, a special status was accorded to it under Article 370 whereby employment and ownership of property were restricted to Kashmiri citizens. But gradually the highly interventionist policies of the Indian state, including the installation of centrally approved state governments, incremental abrogation of article 373,<sup>46</sup> and political and economic mismanagement of the state, turned the Kashmiris against the centre. Heavily rigged assembly elections in 1987 led to further disillusionment among mainstream leaders. Rising

<sup>45</sup>Census 1981, Government of India. Cited in Ashutosh Varshney, "Three Compromised Nationalisms: Why Kashmir Has Been a Problem," in Raju G.C. Thomas (ed.), *Perspectives on Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 207.

<sup>46</sup>For details see Reeta Chowdhury Tremblay, "Nation, Identity, and the Intervening Role of the State - A Study of the Secessionist Movement in Kashmir," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 69, no. 4, Winter 1996-97, p. 484.

unemployment among educated youth, widespread poverty, and skewed allocation of resources for development deepened the feeling that there was discrimination by the centre.<sup>47</sup> The centre's policies of repressing opposition politics led to the failure of the National Conference, the regional party led by Farooq Abdullah, to strike firm roots in Kashmir.<sup>48</sup> The political and economic disillusionment ultimately contributed to the rise of militancy in the state.

The contemporary Kashmir problem contains a volatile mixture of self-determination (including national self-determination) and Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>49</sup> The fact that the Kashmir problem has both internal and external dimensions has accentuated the scope of the conflict. Its differing implications for India and Pakistan makes resolution of the conflict more difficult.<sup>50</sup> India claims that Pakistan's

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<sup>47</sup> Despite massive financial assistance to the state, economic growth has failed to keep pace with the increase in population, with no significant rise in real per capita incomes. The development of industry has been minimal while agriculture has not contributed much to the state GDP. This has been particularly detrimental to the state economy which has one of the lowest capital endowments in the country and is heavily dependent on imports of food, fuel and other capital goods. See Rita Tremblay, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>48</sup> According to Puri, "The National Conference symbolised, in particular, the anger of the people of Kashmir against the dismissal of the duly elected government of Farooq Abdullah in 1984. When two years later he joined hands with the party responsible for his dismissal, his National Conference ceased to be an instrument of protest and was instead perceived by the people of Kashmir to be an instrument of humiliation." For details see Balraj Puri, "Rajiv-Farooq Accord: What Went Wrong," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, no. 30, pp. 1689-90. Also see Asghar Ali Engineer, "Kashmir - Autonomy Only Solution," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, no. 35, pp. 2167-68.

<sup>49</sup> Links between Islam and Kashmir have been dealt with well in Balraj Puri, "Kashmiri Muslims, Islam and Kashmiri tradition," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 25, no. 6, 10 February 1990, pp. 307-8.

<sup>50</sup> The reading material on Kashmir is extensive. For details of the historical roots of the problem see Gowher Rizvi, "Nehru and the Indo-Pakistan Rivalry over Kashmir 1947-64," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 1995, pp. 17-37; Sisir K. Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in Indo-Pak Relations* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1967). Some other recent works include M. J. Akbar, *Kashmir: Behind the Vale* (New Delhi: Viking, 1991); Balraj Puri, *Kashmir: Towards Insurgency* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993). For a critical appraisal of the Indian state see Paula Newberg, *Double Betrayal - Repression and Insurgency in Kashmir* (Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1995).

continued help in terms of planning and co-ordination, training of militants across the border, supply of sophisticated arms and substantial funds, has given a tremendous boost to militancy in Kashmir; while Pakistan admits to providing moral support to the insurgents in the valley awash with "blood and tears" and "crying for freedom."<sup>51</sup>

Although the prospects for restoration of political dialogue have remained dim in the face of killings and atrocities by both the militants and the para-military forces,<sup>52</sup> the Indian government has not given up its efforts at various levels, including the use of force, to curb militancy. Steady efforts to initiate a political process to facilitate elections bore fruit in 1996 when parliamentary and state assembly elections led to the installation of the National Conference government in the state.

Militancy has not been stamped out, and the valley remains hostage to the gun culture; but frustration with prolonged violence, economic dislocation and hardship, and disillusionment with the militants' intrusion in their private lives has led the weary people of Kashmir to long for normalcy and peace. It is of course not clear if there will be an

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<sup>51</sup>Statement made by Benazir Bhutto. Cited in James Clad and Salamat Ali, "Indo-Pak tension Mounts over Kashmir - Will Words Lead to War?" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 148, no. 17, April 26, 1990, p. 10. Also see Edward Desmond, "The Insurgency in Kashmir (1989-1991)," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 1995, pp. 8-16.

<sup>52</sup>According to an official estimate, between 1990 and 1993 some 7,600 civilians were killed by militants and military troops, although Kashmiri groups maintain that during the last four years, the figure has gone up to 20,000. During the same period para-military forces have lost 694 lives. Figures cited in Rita Chowdhari Tremblay, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

easy and early return of total normalcy, but a political resolution of the crisis is not outside the realms of possibility.<sup>53</sup>

The growing clamour for autonomy may continue to be at times compounded by sporadic militancy and violence, as in Punjab, Kashmir or the North-east. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that India's very functioning - in a continent-size country with a large, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diversified population - poses difficulties in making generalisations. As Marshall Bouton has concluded, despite gigantic socio-economic problems and the prolonged incapacity of the government to resolve them, democratic politics has not been undermined. India's vibrant democracy has been "the ultimate source of the state legitimacy, the major avenue of group mobility and the main ingredient in the glue that has kept the country together."<sup>54</sup>

Although India's elections in 1998, which gave no single party a majority and resulted in yet another coalition government at the centre, have aroused fears regarding India's political viability in some quarters, the reality continues to defy such fears.

As Bouton has put it,

India's political system has for several years been in transition from Congress Party dominance to a more splintered picture in which regional and caste-based parties control most states, alongside a still unclear political pattern at the centre. But neither the frequent changes of government nor the rise of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as the national party should be mistaken for threats to India's underlying stability or its very unity. Rather they are integral to the latest stage ... of a social and political transformation made possible by democracy itself.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>For an excellent analysis of the Indian government's options in Kashmir see Sumit Ganguly and Kanti Bajpai, "India and the Crisis in Kashmir," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, no. 5, May 1994, pp. 401-16.

<sup>54</sup>Marshall Bouton, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.



Despite the growing ineffectiveness of government, social turmoil and frequent challenges to national authority in the name of religion, caste and regional identities, India has shown a remarkable resilience in sustaining its democratic federal framework. This has over the years provided fairly effective mechanisms for negotiation, compromise and cooperation amongst its diverse and competing regional groups.

The process of widening and reinforcing electoral mobilisation has provided growing opportunities for more and more marginalised groups. Even as pressures from diverse groups are continuously sought to be defused by a process of bargaining, consensus building and intensive group interaction, regional parties and groups are finding their own place in the political arena.

India has had twelve general elections so far - generally free and fair - which itself is a remarkable exercise, considering that it involves an electorate of over 600 million people. The ballot box has mobilised numerous linguistic, ethnic, and caste groups in the states, as also parties to represent them. At the same time, because the electorate is so divided by ethnicity, language, caste and religion, there are very few issues in India which can swing a broad political or geographic spectrum of the Indian electorate. The competitive party system limits religious revivalist movements.

Thus over the long term, even the not-so-moderate parties like BJP are pushed towards moderation and power-sharing. "Extremist and separatist appeals almost always wind up being repudiated at the ballot box."<sup>56</sup> For instance, in Punjab,

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<sup>56</sup>Marshall Bouton, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

despite a decade of separatist violence and repression, voters strongly endorsed the moderate Sikh party once the political process was permitted to function.

Although doubts continue periodically to be expressed about India's ability to remain united, India's nation-building record over the last five decades continues to be strong. The country's international boundaries have not changed after 1947 despite several secessionist threats and the remaining challenges to national integrity. A combination of coercive power and political accommodation by the state has not allowed separatist demands to go beyond a point; rather they are used as bargaining chips in seeking greater autonomy within the federal framework.

### **Pakistan**

Ethnic conflict has presented the most formidable challenge to Pakistan since its inception. It has already led to two civil wars and to the secession of the country's most populous province, East Pakistan, in 1971. Despite these experiences, ethnic conflict has continued unabated. The effervescence of ethnic politics has continued under democratic governments since 1988. According to one source, the root of the problem [the crisis of national identity] is largely due to the ruling elite's hesitation to commit the state to policies which would foster a viable national identity.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Seyyed Nasr, "State, Society and the Crisis of National Unity," in Rasul Bakhsh Rais (ed.), *State, Society and Democratic Change in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 103.

This has been the result of the interplay of the

particular mix of Islamicity and ethnic consciousness in the Pakistan movement, the ruling elite's largely political and unitarian attachment to Islam, Pakistan's feudal socio-economic structure and the impact of the country's national economic policy since 1947.<sup>58</sup>

Pakistan has been under military rule for twenty-five of the fifty years of its existence and has had a poor record of parliamentary democracy. After the death of Mohammad Ali Jinnah in 1948, no leader was able to provide effective leadership to the country. The initial confusion and delay in producing a stable political order under which people could participate in the decision-making process retarded the growth of political institutions. It was only in 1956, after nine years of independence, that Pakistan was able to frame and adopt a democratic constitution for itself. And even after that, an atmosphere of political uncertainty prevailed in the absence of political parties of national stature. The rapid decline of the Muslim League and the formation of new parties led to the formation of coalition governments from 1954 onwards, initiating unstable party politics in the country.

It was against this background that martial law was declared by General Ayub Khan in October 1958, marking a historic turning point in Pakistan's history. From then on, as Khalid Bin Sayeed has put it, Pakistani leaders have been only marginally concerned about the development of democratic institutions, obsessed as they have been with "following a strategy of survival through strengthening state structures and institutions through the bureaucracy and the army which has led to increasing ethnic, class and other conflicts."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Seyyed Nasr, "State, Society and the Crisis of National Unity," *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>59</sup>Khalid Bin Sayeed, "Some Reflections on the Democratic Process," in Rasul Bux Rais, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 2.

For example, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was in power from 1971 to 1977, took several measures to strengthen his own power base and directed his institutional reform at the civil bureaucracy and military establishment to effectively curb their autonomy. Several steps were taken to neutralise the military establishment including the removal of many senior officers and the restructuring of the military high command with a view to diluting the powers of the respective chiefs. Z.A. Bhutto also struck at the power of the bureaucracy by dismissing hundreds of civil servants and introducing a system of lateral entry.<sup>60</sup> However, he was soon to realise that he could not function effectively without the support of the powerful military-bureaucratic combine. Given his failure to mobilise the organisational base of the PPP and the growing antagonism from several powerful lobbies in the country, Z. A. Bhutto was forced to increasingly lean on the coercive instrument of the state authority including the Federal Security Police, which was used to quell the protest against his dictatorial rule by his political opponents. Under his rule repressive measures were used against party opponents and coercive measures were deployed to quell unrest in Baluchistan and the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP).

Zia ul Haq's military regime embarked on a similar, systematic process of stifling political opposition and legitimising his rule by exploiting Islam.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> For details see Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia-A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications, 1995), pp. 80-85. Also see Khalid bin Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan: Nature and direction of Change* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1980), pp. 104-110.

<sup>61</sup> Craig Baxter and Javed Burki, *Pakistan under the Military: Eleven Years of Zia ul Haq* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 35-39. For details on Zia's rule see Mushahid Hussain, *Pakistan's Politics: The Zia Years* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1991); Surendra Nath Kaushik, *Politics of Islamisation in Pakistan: A Study of The Zia Regime* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1993).

Through the difficult course of events during Pakistan's five decades of independence, multiple nationalities were ignored or repressed and the much desired national fabric could not be woven to accommodate the country's many ethnicities.<sup>62</sup> Islam could not substitute for effective political management.<sup>63</sup> The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 challenged the basis of Pakistan's Islamic ideal. It was a painful reminder that religion alone could not bring about a cohesive national identity, nor could it compensate for the lack of political power sharing, and existing widespread economic, social and cultural disparities.

Before partition, Muslims claimed to be a distinct nation on the basis of religion but "once Pakistan was created, Islam no longer paraded as ethnicity but was charged with the task of containing it."<sup>64</sup> While Muslim separation was most popular in Muslim-minority provinces in India, Pakistan was created in Muslim-majority areas in North western India and Bengal. The language of the Muslim-minority provinces was Urdu which had very little following in Sindh, Baluchistan or Bengal; nor did Sindhis, Punjabis, Bengalis, Biharis or Hyderabadis follow the same customs and mores; they were different people who, save for their religion, shared more with their Hindu neighbours than with Muslims of other provinces.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Lawrence Ziring, "Pakistan's Nationality Dilemma," in Ziring (ed.), *Subcontinent in World Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 88-114.

<sup>63</sup>Lawrence Ziring, "Political Development: Issues and Perspectives" in Rais Bux (ed.), op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>64</sup>Seyyed Nasr, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 105. Also see Selig Harrison, "Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan," in Joseph V. Montville (ed.), *Conflict and Peace Making in Multi Ethnic Society* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991), pp. 301-26.

Emphasis on cultural and linguistic assimilation in Pakistan was based on the mistaken premise that Bengalis, Sindhis, Baluchis and Pushtuns would willingly surrender their rich historical and cultural tradition in return for a narrowly defined Pakistani identity that traced its roots to northern India. There were few, if any, efforts on the part of the central elites to incorporate the history, language or cultural experiences of Pakistan's different ethnic groups into a modern sense of national identity. Urdu, spoken by barely 8 percent of the population, was declared the national language in Pakistan; this in turn had important ramifications for the education, civil service employment and economic development of other communities. It contributed to severe tensions between the centre and provinces, deepened urban-rural differences, and intensified conflicts.

The mix of Islam and ethnicity on which Pakistan was promised did not by itself constitute a national identity. According to Seyyed Nasr, the success of achieving a secular national identity would have depended on wide-scale social reform and equitable distribution of resources but this was never achieved because it ran counter to the class interests of the ruling elite and defied their developmental agenda.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Seyyed Nasr, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

As he concludes, during the early years, Pakistan's economic policy

reflected class interests and as such led to an inequitable distribution of resources among different classes as well as different regions and ethnic groups. Not only did these policies not promote national unity, on balance they undermined it.<sup>67</sup>

At this time in Pakistan the economic interests of Muhajir and Punjabi politicians, bureaucrats and army officers, along with the Punjabi-Sindhi landed classes, produced a ruling class which has been termed by a noted Pakistani scholar a *Salariat*.<sup>68</sup> The result was that Islam became a tool in the hands of the ruling elites in dealing with problems which threatened the state as well as those which pertained to factional rivalries.<sup>69</sup> The secessionist movement in East Pakistan and the present turmoil in Sindh will be studied to examine the fragility of Pakistan's federal structure.

#### *East Pakistan*

The first to object to Punjabi dominance were the Bengalis. Between 1955 and 1971, the West wing had been brought under one-unit to obscure the distinctive identities of the less numerous linguistic groups in Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan, and also to seek parity with the Bengalis who formed the East wing.

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<sup>67</sup>Seyyed Nasr, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>68</sup>Hamza Alavi, "Ethnicity, Muslim Society and Pak Ideology," in Anita M. Weiss (ed.), *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 21-22.

<sup>69</sup>Seyyed Nasr, p. 109. To see how Islam has been used as an ideology by successive governments in Pakistan see Stanley J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds - Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 194-210.

Prior to 1971, the Bengalis in the East wing, who constituted half of Pakistan's total population, remained woefully under-represented in the civil bureaucracy and military. Resentment at the imposition of Urdu as the sole national language led to further alienation among the Bengalis. By the 1960s, the religious affinities which had bound the two wings of Pakistan had been eroded by an acute sense of political denial and economic exploitation. Regional imbalance between the two wings was sharpened by the wide difference in per capita income, allocation of resources, and representation in the military and bureaucracy.<sup>70</sup>

East Pakistanis were especially concerned that income derived from East Pakistan was not invested back into that province but was used to subsidise the development of West Pakistan in general and Punjab in particular, making East Pakistan a virtual colony of Pakistan.<sup>71</sup> The demand for autonomy, as articulated in the six point program of the Awami League, was in effect a demand for democratisation and effective federalism,<sup>72</sup> envisaging the transfer of power over currency, and the utilisation of foreign exchange earnings to the regional government, and a return to the parliamentary form of government within a truly federal framework.<sup>73</sup> According to Urmila Phadnis,

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<sup>70</sup>For details see Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, 170-74.

<sup>71</sup>Even though East Pakistan provided most of the foreign exchange, central expenditure, in particular foreign exchange for development, was concentrated in the west wing. West Pakistan used its East wing to develop Karachi and Punjab. Raw materials were brought from the East to develop goods in the West wing and the finished products were sold back to the East. Between 1948 and 1953, exports from West Pakistan to the East exceeded imports from East to West by 909 million rupees. See Tariq Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive? The Death of a State* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 46, 85-87.

<sup>72</sup>For text of the six point program see Ramendu Mazumdar (ed), *Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh, My Bangladesh, Selected Speeches and Statements, October 28, 1970 to March 26, 1971* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 127-28.

<sup>73</sup>For an analysis see Raunaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1973).



"liberation" of East Pakistan was more in terms of emancipation of the area from economic and political fetters. It did not imply secession, but secession was an option which was kept handy in case political expediency warranted it.<sup>74</sup> Eventually, the West wing's power elite's unwillingness to share power resulted in the secession of the East wing from Pakistan.

Some scholars, however, have also underlined the crucial role played by India in providing diplomatic, financial, military support to the East Bengalis. Indeed Indian military intervention in late 1971 on behalf of the Bengalis has been seen by some scholars as the decisive factor behind the success of the Bengali secessionist movement greatly enhancing its audibility, visibility and acceptability which most secessionist movements find hard to achieve.<sup>75</sup> At the same time it is pertinent to point out that while India's role in the emergence of Bangladesh is significant, the seeds of discord were present in the lopsided distribution of political and economic power between the two wings which engendered the conflict that was precipitated further by Pakistan's policy of repression in East Pakistan.

Even after the secession of the East wing, little changed. Although the new democratic regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto tried to be responsive to smaller provinces by giving them equal representation with Punjab in the Upper House under the 1973 constitution, this made little difference, as the Senate had no financial power.

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<sup>74</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>75</sup>Rajat Ganguly, *Kin State Interventions in Ethnic Conflicts, Lessons from South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998), pp. 125.

With the dismantling of the one-unit system, the Punjabis constituted nearly 60 percent of the population and 70 percent of the military services. They also dominated the federal bureaucracy and formed a large percentage of civil servants and police forces in the provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan. But there was no system of weighted representation to ensure that the strength of the smaller provinces in the National Assembly was equal to if not greater than that of the Punjab.

As Hamza Alavi has pointed out, unlike India, where no single ethnic group can be identified as the dominant holder of state power at the centre, ethnic movements in Pakistan are directed against the central power, demanding regional autonomy. The autocratic power of the central government is identified by disadvantaged regional groups as Punjabi domination.<sup>76</sup>

As a consequence, while a similar situation has resulted in negotiation with a variety of local groups in the exercise of state power in India, in Pakistan, by contrast, the dominance of a single group of Punjabis in the military and bureaucracy has worked to the disadvantage of other groups. The predominantly Punjabi military and federal bureaucracy in Pakistan has engendered feelings of alienation among the Sindhis, Muhajirs and Baluch in terms of access to employment opportunities, better social services and an adequate share of financial resources. The case of the Baluch, one of the main case studies of this thesis, will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>76</sup>Hamza Alavi, "Problems of Ethnicity in Pakistan," Paper presented at the International Conference on "Cooperation for Peace, Security and Development in Southern Asia and the Pacific Region," 17-19 January 1988, New Delhi.

*Sindh*

The situation in Sindh has remained extremely complicated because it is a multi-ethnic province. The battle lines are drawn at many levels: between the Sindhis and Muhajirs; Muhajirs and Pushtuns; and between the Sindhi and Muhajirs against the Punjabis.

Initially overwhelmingly Muhajir in composition, the pattern of urban population in Sindh changed over the years with the entry of large numbers of Pushtuns and Punjabis to the industrial centres of Sindh.<sup>77</sup> With Punjabis dominating most positions of wealth and power in the province, both Sindhis and Muhajirs found themselves increasingly relegated to the background. Although Sindhis remain the formal majority in statistical terms, a number of demographic changes have taken place since the early 1980s. Not much data is available on the 1998 census conducted in Pakistan but some scholars believe that the Muhajirs, who have steadily grown in number since 1981, remain effectively disenfranchised in Sindh.<sup>78</sup>

This made for a sense of growing resentment, particularly among the Muhajirs, who lost out heavily in the new situation of Punjabi domination. From being in a position of dominance (1947-51), then of partnership with the Punjabi elite (1951-71), the Muhajirs found themselves being left out in the cold. The entry of the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) into the political landscape in 1984 saw the beginning of demands for the recognition of the Muhajirs as the fifth

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<sup>77</sup>In the 1981 census, Sindhis accounted for only 52 percent of the population of Sindh with Muhajirs accounting for 22 percent. In urban areas Muhajirs are estimated to account for over 50 percent of the population.

<sup>78</sup>M.B. Naqvi, "Ethno-nationalism in Pakistan: Cross Border Overlaps," *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, no. 2, July-December 1997, p. 220.

nationality of Pakistan. Grievances of the Muhajirs range from discrimination in employment and admission to educational institutions, to perceived discrimination by the provincial government composed of native Sindhis and the Punjabi-dominated federal bureaucracy and army.

Muhajirs, who constitute 40 percent of the total population of Sindh and 12 percent of the total population of Pakistan, feel they are not getting a proportionate share in jobs and admissions to state-owned educational institutions in urban Sindh.<sup>79</sup> The nationalisation of banks and industries in 1972 and the introduction of the rural-urban quota system in jobs in federal and provincial institutions deepened the cleavages between the Muhajirs and the Sindhis. The Muhajirs want the end of the quota system and allocation of government jobs ~~and~~

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<sup>79</sup>Kaiser Bengali, "Defining Mohajir Grievances," *Dawn* (Karachi), 13 February 1996.

and admission to educational institutions on the basis of merit. Their other demands include the repatriation of Biharis (those who went to Bangladesh after the 1971 war) to Pakistan; and the division of the Sindh and creation of a Muhajir province, the boundaries of which remain vague and undefined.<sup>80</sup> Thus, at one level, the Muhajirs have been locked into a fierce confrontation with the establishment. Operation Clean-Up, launched in May 1992 by the MQM, initiated a period of sustained violence in Karachi. At another level, the confrontation created tensions with the Sindhis who demanded that all Muhajirs be sent back to their native country.<sup>81</sup>

Sindhi nationalism, on the other hand, is based on Sindhi language, culture and history. The Sindhis have had a deep-seated resentment of Muhajir control of the province, particularly the urban centres. Before the coming of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, most of the land in the province was allotted to armed forces personnel or refugees from India, depriving the Sindhis of their share in the province.<sup>82</sup> They were also poorly represented in the federal bureaucracy, with most of the high ranking positions going to Muhajirs or Punjabis who had either established residence or obtained Sindhi domicile certificates.<sup>83</sup> The demands of the Sindhis include the discontinuance of migration from other provinces into Sindh; exclusion of non-Sindhis from employment and business in Sindh; reconstitution of electoral districts in a way that old Sindhis will fill at least two-thirds of the

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<sup>80</sup>Mehtab Ali Shah, "The Emergence of the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) in Pakistan and its Implications for Regional Security," Round Table, no. 348, October 1998, pp. 510-511.

<sup>81</sup>*Daily Jang* (Karachi) 4 July 1995.

<sup>82</sup>For details see Farida Shaheed, "The Pathan-Muhajir Conflicts, 1985-6: A National Perspective," in Veena Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 199.

<sup>83</sup>Anwar H. Syed, "Political Parties and the Nationality Question in Pakistan," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.12, no. 1, 1988, p. 55.

seats in the provincial assembly and two-thirds of Sindh's quota of seats in the national assembly; and restriction of the federal government's powers to defence, foreign affairs, currency, and communications. They define a Sindhi as a person who was born in Sindh or has lived in Sindh for twenty-five years.<sup>84</sup>

Extremist organisations such as the Jiye Sindh Tehrik, the Jiye Sindh Qaum Parast Party and the Jiye Sindh Taraqqi Pasand Party have moved one step further and openly espoused the creation of a separate Sindh state or Sindhu Desh. G. M. Sayed, one of the proponents of Sindhu Desh and founder of the Jiye Sindh Mahaz (Long Live Sindh Front), wanted a Sindhu Desh based on the principles of secularism, socialism, democracy and nationalism. It envisaged among other things, a redistribution of agricultural land from non-Sindhis to Sindhis; management and control of trade, commerce, banks, insurance companies, and government agencies by Sindhi speaking permanent residents of Sindh; equitable land reform; strict separation of religion and state; and the declaration of Sindhi as the sole national and official language of Sindh.<sup>85</sup>

Bhutto tried to redress the imbalance in Sindh by channelling more development resources to the province and making Sindhi the sole official language, but he had to backtrack on the Sindhi Language Act in the face of violent riots between Sindhi and Urdu speaking people in urban Sindh. The situation was worsened by the fact that the state sought to create inter-ethnic alliances and manipulate ethnic rivalries

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<sup>84</sup>Anwar H. Syed, "Political Parties and the Nationality Question in Pakistan," *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>85</sup>For the main socio-economic and political features of Sindhu Desh see G. M. Sayed, *A Case for Sindhu Desh* (Bombay: Sorah Publishers, 1985), pp. 80-85.

to its advantage. Zia appealed to Islam in the hope of defusing ethnic tensions, but failed to solve the crisis in Sindh. He did not rescind the quota systems introduced in Sindh by the PPP. At the same time, he projected the interests of the non-Sindhi military-bureaucratic-industrial complex. His politics failed to satisfy either the Sindhis or the Muhajirs, the latter objecting to what they perceived as the government's pro-Sindhi policies and its support for Punjabi and Pathan intrusion into urban Sindh. Sindh has since been transformed into a cauldron of discontent.<sup>86</sup> Although the MQM has been consistently winning credibility in urban Sindh in all four general elections, and extending support to both the Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif governments at the centre, it has not brought the political solution of the problem any nearer. Sindh has remained embroiled in anarchy and held tenuously by the armed might of the state since the army crackdown in 1992. This has fostered anti-Punjabi sentiments in the province.

Some scholars like Ayesha Jalal are of the view that it is the real politik, not ethnic discord, that has been the propelling factor in the alignment of political forces in Sindh.<sup>87</sup> She claims that the underlying causes of Sindh's crisis are undeniably political and economic in nature, traceable to the most inequitable state structure.<sup>88</sup> But whichever perspective one takes, there is no denying that as long as regional inequities persist within the state structure, and vast

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<sup>86</sup>In 1983 a Sindhi uprising was put down by the armed might of the state. Mohajir anger manifested itself in the form of anti-Pathan riots in 1985-86, and the province became engulfed in a protracted conflict between the MQM and the PPP. For details of the riots see Stanley J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds - Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 183-94.

<sup>87</sup>Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197.

sections of the poor in provinces like Sindh and Baluchistan remain powerless, Pakistan's federal dilemma will continue; the fundamental question is: how to reconcile the simmering contradictions between its all-embracing Islamic identity and ethnic pulls?

### **Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is a functioning democracy but, unlike India and Pakistan, it is a unitary state and not a federation. The case of Sri Lanka is instructive in two respects: it underlines the importance of external linkages in sustaining a movement (Tamil nationalism in this case) for almost two decades; and, more significantly, it shows the inability of the Sri Lankan state to combat this challenge. While the democratic framework has imparted a certain degree of legitimacy to the state, successive governments have been unable to resolve the intractable ethnic issue.

The growing schism between the Sinhalese majority, comprising about 74 percent of the Sri Lankan population, and the Tamil minority which accounts for 18 percent of the population, has led to an upsurge of ethnic conflict in the island.<sup>89</sup> According to S.D. Muni, ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka is essentially of its own making. There is no record of Sinhala-Tamil communal strife in the country's pre-

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<sup>89</sup> According to the 1988 census, Sri Lanka comprises many ethnic groups of which the Sinhalese are in a majority (74 percent), followed by Tamils (18 percent), Moors (7 percent) and Burghers, Malays and Veddhas (one percent). See Mahfuzul H. Chowdhury, "Ethnic Conflicts and Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka," in Naveed Ahmad Tahir (ed.), *The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe and South Asia* (Area Study Centre for Europe, University of Karachi and Hanns Seidal Foundation, 1997), p. 138.



independence history.<sup>90</sup> In fact, quite unlike the Baluch in Pakistan or the Sikhs in Punjab, the Tamils in Sri Lanka had a fair share in the power structure of colonial Sri Lanka. But since independence, and particularly during the last two decades, the Tamils started feeling alienated from the political mainstream, leading to a demand for Eelam, a separate Tamil state. Both the SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party) and United National Party (UNP), which have shared power alternately since 1956, adopted measures which were perceived by the Tamils as being discriminatory against them.

The roots of the crisis may be traced to a set of policies initiated in the post-independence period by successive Sri Lankan governments in the fields of education, employment and economic activities, which were inimical to the interests of minority communities such as the Tamils.<sup>91</sup> . The passing of the Official Language Act in 1956, declaring Sinhala to be the office language of Sri Lanka, had an adverse effect on the Tamils by limiting their opportunities in government service and other employment.<sup>92</sup> Regarded as a betrayal by the Sinhalese leadership,<sup>93</sup> the language issue was perhaps "the pivotal factor that

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<sup>90</sup>S. D. Muni, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis and India's Response," in Dagmar Bernstorff and Dieter Braun (eds), *Political Transition in South Asia - Regional Cooperation, Ethnic Conflict, Political Participation* (Stuttgart: Franzsteiner Verlag, 1991), p. 54.

<sup>91</sup>For details see James Manor (ed.), *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis* (London, Croom Helm, 1984); S.J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka-Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>92</sup>For example, out of 100 people selected in the 1973 Administrative Service Examination, only four were Tamils and two Muslims; the rest were Sinhalese. See Walter Schwarz, *The Tamils of Sri Lanka*, Minority Rights Group Report No. 25 (London, 1988) p. 10. For ethnic representation in Selected Government Employment Categories from 1948-1981 see Ambalavanar Sivarajah, *Politics of Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1996), p. 85.

<sup>93</sup>It was considered to be a betrayal because following the outbreak of violence on the language issue, a pact was signed on 20 July 1957 by the then prime minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, recognising Tamil as the language of the national minority and the language of administration in the Northern and Eastern provinces, but it was repudiated in the face of Sinhalese pressure. See C.R. de Silva, "The Sinhalese-Tamil Rift in Sri Lanka," in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton (eds), *The*

drove the two communities asunder in the post-independence period."<sup>94</sup> Subsequently, changes in the admission policy seeking to reduce the percentage of Tamil tertiary students added to the frustration of Tamil youth. Standardising schemes and district quotas were introduced in 1974 to effectively restrict the entry of Tamil students in universities.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the land settlement policies of the government were seen as a means for changing the demographic character of the Tamil populace in the Eastern and Northern provinces.

Up to the 1970s, Tamil nationalism was largely a reaction to the imposition of pro-Sinhalese policies, but by 1972 the demand for autonomy changed to that of secession. The 1972 constitution, incorporating the principle of unitary structure, was heavily biased against Tamil interests. Subsequently, all Tamil members of parliament walked out in protest to form the Tamil United Front comprising virtually all Tamil groups and parties. Given the Sinhalese intransigence, and having been persistently thwarted in their quest for solving legitimate Tamil demands within the existing state framework, the Front, reconstituted as the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), raised the demand for Tamil Eelam, a separate homeland for the Tamils. President Jayewardene's conciliatory measures - designating Tamil as an associate language,

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*States of South Asia - Problems of National Integration* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1982), pp. 166-68.

<sup>94</sup>See C.R. de Silva, "The Sinhalese-Tamil Rift in Sri Lanka," in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton (eds), *The States of South Asia*, op. cit., p. 164. Also see Robert N. Kearney, "Language and the Rise of Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, no. 5, May 1978, pp. 521-34.

<sup>95</sup>For example, the percentage of Tamil students in engineering colleges fell from 48.3 percent of the total in 1969 to 24.4 percent in 1973 and 14.2 percent in 1975. Cited in C.R. de Silva, "The Sinhalese-Tamil Rift in Sri Lanka," in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton (eds), op. cit., p. 168.

amending education procedures, and offering limited autonomy through district councils - came too late and were too little to assuage the deep sense of Tamil deprivation.<sup>96</sup>

This has been the main obstacle to peace between the two communities. In the early years, efforts to provide a modicum of regional autonomy to the Tamils floundered because the parties, when in opposition, spared no efforts to cash in on Sinhalese Buddhist sentiments to frustrate any move for a structural rearrangement of the administrative system.<sup>97</sup> According to James Manor the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka was also a result of the failure of the national political elite to endow local governments with substantive powers which were necessary to transform them into strong, vital elements of a broadly-based organisation.<sup>98</sup>

Later in the late 1970s, when the Jayewardene government tried to win over the Tamils, the Tamil leadership had hardened its posture, demanding outright secession. The LTTE has since stood firm on its demand for a sovereign socialist state of Eelam.

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<sup>96</sup>A second republican Constitution enacted under Jayewardene in 1978 contained many measures to win back the Tamils. For example, both Tamil and Sinhala were recognised as national languages; all laws and official reports were required to be published in both languages; the distinction between "citizenship by descent" and 'citizen by registration' was abolished and all citizens were deemed to be citizens of Sri Lanka. See C.R. de Silva, "The Sinhalese-Tamil Rift in Sri Lanka," in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson and Dennis Dalton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.169. Also see S. Bhaduri and A. Karim, *The Sri Lankan Crisis* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>97</sup>For example, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957, which included concessions to the Tamils on a number of issues in the Northern and Eastern provinces, was repudiated soon after under pressure from the Sinhalese lobby. Similarly the non-acceptance of the proposal on the devolution of powers between the centre and the provinces by the SLFP in 1986 marked a continuation of the same trend. See Phadnis, *op.cit.*, pp. 198-99.

<sup>98</sup>James Manor, "The Failure of Political Integration in Sri Lanka," *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 17, no. 1, March 1979, p. 22.

It has justified it on the basis that:

We have a homeland, a historically constituted habitation with a well defined territory embracing the Northern and Eastern provinces, distinct language, a rich culture and tradition, a unique economic life and a lengthy history extending to over three thousand years. As a nation, we have the inalienable right of self-determination.<sup>99</sup>

Eelam is envisaged as a secular, democratic, socialist state which would guarantee the democratic liberties and freedom of all its citizens, and in which all forms of exploitation and social oppression would be abolished. It stands for the abolition of Sinhalese colonisation of Tamil areas and the recognition of Muslims in the new state.

The Tamil leadership wanted sovereignty but the government was not willing to accept this position on the grounds that "Sri Lanka is a unitary republic, though made up of a plurality of peoples. Therefore divided sovereignty is inconceivable."<sup>100</sup>

#### *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)*

Consequently, violence became an endemic feature of the Sri Lankan polity, with the rise of several militant organisations espousing the Tamil and Sinhalese causes.<sup>101</sup> Of these, the LTTE has emerged as one of the world's most feared organisations; and any resolution to the crisis depends on its willingness to negotiate. Generally speaking,

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<sup>99</sup>Ishtiaq Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Pinter Publications, 1998), p. 265.

<sup>100</sup>Statement made by J.R. Jayewardene in Dennis Austin and Anirudha Gupta, "Lions and Tigers - The Crisis in Sri Lanka," *Conflict Studies*, 211, May 1988, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup>Some of these include People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE); the Marxist-Leninist Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS); the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPLRM); and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO).

most states in South Asia have been able to overcome organised militancy after a certain period of time. The case of the LTTE merits special attention in that it has continued to pose a grave challenge to the Sri Lankan state for almost two decades with little or no respite, making it a "success story" without parallel in the region. It may be instructive at this point to consider its strategies and strengths.

Drawing on the loyalties and resources of members of a global Tamil diaspora, the LTTE has evolved a complex network linking commercial companies and small business, informal banking channels, a fleet of ships, political offices, human rights organisations, arms dealers and foreign mercenaries.<sup>102</sup> As Rohan Gunaratne says,

By late 1995, 40 percent of LTTE War budget was generated from overseas. Since the loss of Jaffna peninsula in early 1996, 60 percent of the LTTE war budget is being generated from overseas. The LTTE has been engaged in a number of ventures that continue to bring them a massive revenue.<sup>103</sup>

At home, the LTTE, with an estimated number of 4000 to 15,000 fighters, has used suicide bombers and explosives to target prominent people and institutions.<sup>104</sup> There are reports of LTTE procuring arms from South-east Asia, particularly Burma, Thailand, and Singapore, Hong Kong and Pakistan; it has effective anti-aircraft capability, specifically surface-to-air missiles, and a stock of sophisticated explosives.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Asiaweek*, 26 July 1996.

<sup>103</sup> Rohan Gunaratne, *International and Regional Security: Implications of the Sri Lankan Insurgency* (United Kingdom: Alumni Association of Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, 1997), pp. 23-24.

<sup>104</sup> It has killed a number of prominent Sri Lankan leaders including President Premadasa in May 1993, Gajasinghe Tilakaratne, the opposition leader, in October 1994, and TULF leaders A. Amrithalingam in 1989 and A. Thungadurai in 1997.

<sup>105</sup> *Asiaweek*, 26 July 1996.

In recent years, the LTTE's intransigence on the question of sovereignty, its abrupt pulling out of the peace talks set in motion by present President Kumaratunga, and its rejection of the President's plans for constitutional reforms have eroded its standing in the international community<sup>106</sup> and pushed back the process of finding a compromise solution. Commenting on the LTTE's rejection of the peace talks and breaking of the ceasefire in 1995, President Kumaratunga made it clear that while she remained committed to a peaceful settlement of the ethnic crisis, she did not underestimate the ruthlessness and chicanery of LTTE, which she termed "the most ruthless and most effective guerrilla organisation in the 20th century."<sup>107</sup>

There is no disputing that the Tamil militant struggle could not have been sustained in the initial stages without India's moral and material support. India's position, however, remained geared to expediting a negotiated settlement within the framework of the existing situation for the Tamils, with whom, although separated by nationality and citizenship, its own Tamils had deep emotional ties. The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord signed by the Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene in July 1987<sup>108</sup> offered a brief respite, but did little in the face of LTTE's uncompromising stance on sovereignty.

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<sup>106</sup>In 1997, the US termed LTTE a terrorist organisation. Earlier in 1995, Canada, which has a large concentration of Tamils, had classified Tamil guerrillas as a terrorist group. Britain is also taking steps to clamp down on foreign groups which use Britain as a base to plot or finance terrorist activities to be carried out in their original home countries.

<sup>107</sup>*India Today*, 15 May 1995.

<sup>108</sup>The Accord provided for the stationing of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the area; the surrender of arms by militants following amnesty; formation of an interim administrative council in the Northern and Eastern provinces; the holding of elections in the area and devolution of powers at the provincial level. For the text of the Accord see Ambalavanar Sivarajah, *Politics of Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1996), Appendix, pp. 205-211.

The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), sent to enforce the cessation of hostilities, was slowly drawn into a guerrilla war with the LTTE itself .

After the IPKF's withdrawal in 1989, the island plunged into one crisis after another. The victory of the People's Alliance under the leadership of President Chandrika Kumaratunga in 1994, on the slogan of peace and normalcy, provided some hope, but it has remained largely unfulfilled because of the LTTE's unrelenting position on the issue. Although she exhibited great courage and statesmanship in getting the peace process in motion, by lifting the ban on essential supplies to the north, and then launching a massive relief and rehabilitation program for the strife-torn region, the peace talks stalled over the LTTE's demand for an alternate land route to the peninsula and the right of LTTE cadres to carry arms in the Eastern province. Even though the Sri Lankan troops captured Jaffna in 1995, they are still to crush the LTTE and restore civil administration in the area.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, President Kumaratunga's constitutional reform process, designed to end the ethnic conflict, has been virtually grounded as the ruling and opposition parties remain at loggerheads over the draft of the new constitution,<sup>110</sup> which envisages a quasi-federal arrangement or union of states in place of the present unitary state. Under this scheme, the provincial governments would have exclusive powers to make laws on the specified devolved subjects, and execute them. Such power would not be granted to the provincial governments by

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<sup>109</sup>*News Time* (Hyderabad), 1 July 1998.

<sup>110</sup>For details on the devolution debate see *Sri Lanka: The Devolution Debate* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1996).

the central government but would be derived from the constitution.

As an analyst has put it,

Since independence, this is the first major step to make a constitutional framework to accommodate the interests of minority communities. This marks a deviation from the notion of majoritarian democracy which up to now has determined the democratic set up in Sri Lanka. This may be a step towards consensual politics away from the present conflictual politics.<sup>111</sup>

In order to win moderate Tamil support and find a long-term solution to the ethnic crisis, the government came out with draft constitutional reforms to make Sri Lanka a federal state and grant substantial powers to Tamil majority areas. The offer of a political package was part of the government's two-pronged campaign against the Tigers. At the same time it kept military pressure on them in the North. The government, with only a one-seat majority in Parliament, would, however, need the opposition's support for the peace package, as constitutional changes require the support of a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

Even as the draft constitution is mired in the government-opposition tussle, the LTTE, which unilaterally broke off political negotiations in 1995, shows no serious intent to resume negotiations. So far no government in Sri Lanka has been willing to undertake the structural changes to redress the ethnic imbalance. All efforts at devolution and decentralisation of power which could have allowed a measure of autonomy to the Tamils without destroying the integrity of the nation-state have been rejected. The result has been a growing division between the two communities which has escalated from peaceful protests to terrorism and a full blown separatist movement.

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<sup>111</sup>*Daily News* (Colombo), 17 December 1996.



It is clear that a viable settlement in Sri Lanka can be sustained only if the two communities accept each other's legitimate roles in nation-building within the essential framework of the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. There is a growing realisation that Sri Lankan forces cannot win the guerrilla war with the LTTE, which has been acquiring increasingly sophisticated weaponry. The LTTE, on its part, may sustain a prolonged struggle, but cannot attain Eelam and retain it. So long as Sinhalese distrust of substantive decentralisation remains entrenched and the LTTE, without whose participation no viable settlement can hold, remains opposed to a peaceful settlement, nothing substantial can be achieved.<sup>112</sup> This is more so because the LTTE receives tremendous support from the Tamil diaspora, unlike the expatriate Sikh population, which was never able to render large-scale assistance to the Khalistan movement.

### **Bangladesh**

Among the multi-ethnic plural states in South Asia, Bangladesh is perhaps the only one characterized by homogeneity. Yet it was confronted with the problem of integrating its small but significant tribal minority. The problem of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), occupying 10 percent of Bangladesh territory and only one per cent of its population, has its roots in the economic and cultural marginalisation of the tribals, a problem that has over the years been made more intractable by the policies of successive Bangladeshi governments.

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<sup>112</sup>For details see Edward Appathurai, "Communal Politics and National Integration in Sri Lanka," in Milton Israel (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 211-29.

As noted by Syed Anwar Hussain,

At the inception of statehood, Bangladesh with its near demographic homogeneity did not appear to be poised for such an eventuality. But over the years, ethnic turmoil that originated in the CHT has not only jeopardised the nation-building process but also created sources of insecurity for Bangladesh with cross border ramifications.<sup>113</sup>

Bangladesh had to some extent inherited the problem. The Pakistani government's policies, after the withdrawal of the British, were geared to evading the special status of CHT. Its policy of emphasising a single religion, Islam, and a single language, which excluded any belief in multiculturalism and pluralism, further marginalised the tribals who remained a minority both in socio-cultural terms and in power sharing structures. Its policy of encouraging internal migration and developmental projects like the Kaptai Dam uprooted a large majority of tribals from their lands. Disruption of traditional social organisation and economic systems, lack of employment opportunities, and land alienation led to growing disenchantment among the tribals.

Ironically, in the new state of Bangladesh, the Awami League, which had itself led a powerful autonomist movement, failed to recognize the implications of outright denial of tribal autonomy.<sup>114</sup> The five point charter of demands put forth by the tribals in 1972 was rejected by Mujibur Rahman's government (1971-1975), which emphasized the need to subsume any parochial aspirations under the broad rubric of Bengali nationalism. According to one source, the difficulty in

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<sup>113</sup>Syed Anwar Hussain, "Ethnicity and Security of Bangladesh" in Iftekharuzzaman (ed.), op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>114</sup>For details see Ajay Darshan Behera, "Insurgency in the Bangladesh Hills - Chakmas Search for Autonomy," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 19, no. 7, October 1996, p. 990.

finding a solution to the Chakma problem lies in the Islamic political structure of Bangladesh. It does not provide enough scope for accommodation to the Chakmas because they are neither Muslims nor do they identify themselves with Bengali speaking people.<sup>115</sup>

Declaration of Bangladesh as a unicultural and unilingual state in 1974, through a bill in parliament, raised fears among the tribals of the extinction of their cultural identity in the unitary political system.<sup>116</sup> To the people of CHT, the state-sponsored model of nationhood, in its Bengali and Bangladeshi variants, remains a tool of "Bengali hegemonism and dominance."<sup>117</sup>

By the time the first elected government of Bangladesh realised the seriousness of the situation and stopped the steady influx of Bengali population to the CHT in 1973, the tribals had moved to aggressive political and military mobilisation to challenge the government. The government's military offensive, underlined by its setting up of military cantonments in CHT, only made matters worse. Soon after, the tribal leaders formed a broad-based front, Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), to embark on a sustained movement to challenge the government. In 1973, an armed wing, Shanti Bahini, was added. The CHT tribals remained engaged in low-level insurgency against the government for more than two decades.

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<sup>115</sup>Sarojini Sharan and Franklin Vivekananda, *Asia - The 21st Critical Century - The Question of Sub-nationalism in South Asia, Case Studies from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* (Sweden: Bethany Books, 1991), p. 142.

<sup>116</sup>Syed Anwar Hussain, "Insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Problems of Ethnic Minorities in Bangladesh," *Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 1996.

<sup>117</sup>Ameena Mohsin, *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1997), pp. 3-4.

Successive regimes have tried to assuage the tribals by starting a political dialogue and accelerating economic development of the region, but with little success. General Ziaur Rahman's (1975-81) mass rehabilitation programs to settle Bengalis in the tribal areas, and the expansion of the military cantonments to counter the insurgents, were viewed as a ploy to marginalise the tribals. According to one estimate, 400,000 Bengalis were settled in the CHT hills. These settlers were perceived as pushing the Hill people from their ancestral homelands, grabbing their lands, monopolising transport operations, and ruthlessly exploiting the Hill people.<sup>118</sup>

Similarly, even though Hussain Muhammad Ershad (1982-90) created three local government bodies in the area, and provided for limited autonomy by the devolution of some powers to these elected councils, the Shanti Bahini objected to the councils on the grounds that the members were hand-picked by the government which was playing a classic game of divide and rule. Some reconciliation was under way in 1992, when the democratic government of Khaleeda Zia took some steps to expedite a political solution by adding some more subjects to the three councils and declaring a general amnesty for the rebels. Since 1992, the Shanti Bahini leaders have been engaged in holding peace talks with the government.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Ameena Mohsin, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>119</sup>Over the years the tribal demands underwent qualitative changes. In 1992, the PCJSS put forth a 15-point charter of demands which although not differing in substance from its earlier demands, for the first time talked about regional autonomy instead of provincial autonomy. The demand for regional autonomy underlined the Shanti Bahini's inclination to opt for a political rather than a military solution of the problem. The demand basically envisaged a solution within the framework of the Bangladesh Constitution, albeit under an amended institution. See Syed Anwar Hussain, "State and Ethnicity: The Case of Bangladesh," *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 1996, pp. 221-34.

The tribals' demands have over the years centred mainly on: (i) the status of a separate administrative area in CHT with a regional council to be elected by the Hill people and empowered to look after issues concerning regional administration and development; (ii) amalgamation of the three hill districts, Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari into a single administrative and political unit; (iii) expulsion of non-tribals from CHT and facilitation of return of tribals who crossed the border after 1960; (iv) rehabilitation of all members of PCJSS and (v) withdrawal of armed forces from CHT except the Bangladesh Rifles, a paramilitary border control force, to facilitate a peaceful military solution. However, as has been pointed out by Hussain,

No government in Bangladesh, democratic, military or autocratic, has had any clearly thought out and articulated policy towards the Hill people. Since 1972, each government having inherited the problem and driven by the emergency of circumstances sought to rise to the occasion through ad hoc responses. In fact, the nature of such responses has always been conditioned by regime perceptions.<sup>120</sup>

The government responses since 1972-1996 have shown that they did not differ much whether in a democracy or autocracy. In fact the attitude of the majority ruling elite *vis-a-vis* the issue remained the same throughout.<sup>121</sup> The demand for autonomy by the tribals has been interpreted by successive governments in Bangladesh as a secessionist movement undermining the sovereignty of the state.<sup>122</sup>

It is here that the external dimension is brought to the fore. Historically, loyalty of the Hill people has been seen as suspect. Before partition some tribal leaders had made overtures for uniting CHT

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<sup>120</sup>Syed Anwar Hussain, "State and Ethnicity," *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>122</sup>Behera, *op. cit.*, p. 985.

with India, and in 1971 some Chakma leaders engaged in anti-Bangladesh campaigning. Closely intertwined with the burden of history is the vast geopolitical significance of CHT, with forest resources and petroleum potential, adjoining India and Myanmar, which underlies the government's policy of exercising central control.<sup>123</sup> The influx of tribals into Tripura in India and the cross-border linkages of insurgents with Indian tribals also tends to complicate the issue of autonomy.<sup>124</sup> There were also reports of Shanti Bahini and ULFA operating jointly along the Indo-Bangladesh border, and of Indian intelligence agencies assisting Shanti Bahini with arms, bases and training.<sup>125</sup>

Over the years, however, the movement seems to have lost much of its initial stridency. Personality clashes and splits within the PCJSS since 1982 have undermined not only the unity of the tribals but also the effectiveness of the movement.<sup>126</sup> The government's policies, a mix of persuasive and coercive strategies of developmental assistance, limited devolution of powers to local bodies, and heavy military deployment in the region (by one estimate five brigades of the army with 50,000 military personnel), contributed towards weakening the movement. The demographic profile of the region has also changed

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<sup>123</sup>Most of the refugees fled to Tripura in May 1986, when the Bangladesh army and Bengali Muslim settlers went on a rampage in CHT in retaliation for a series of killings by the local ethnic guerrillas, the Shanti Bahini. See Bertil Lintner and Rangamati, "Bangladesh, Intractable Hills," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 148, no. 14, 5 April 1990, p. 22.

<sup>124</sup>Chakma insurgents had reportedly established linkages with Indian rebels in Mizoram and Nagaland and Burmese communist groups and procured arms from them. See Kazi Montu, "Tribal Insurgency in CHT," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 15, no. 36, 6 September 1980, p. 1511.

<sup>125</sup>Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's North East* (New Delhi: Viking Publishers, 1994), p. 298.

<sup>126</sup>Behera, *op. cit.*, p. 994. According to one estimate, with growing infighting and desertions, the number of Shanti Bahini in 1991 had declined drastically to about 3000, with only 2000 belonging to the armed cadre. See Syed Anwar Hussain, "Ethnicity and Security in Bangladesh" in Ittekkharuzzaman (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 179.

with state-sponsored settlement programs of successive governments; according to one estimate, over the last four decades the tribal population has declined from 93 percent of the population to 51 percent.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, with the cooling of India's support to the Chakmas since 1980, when a military accord was signed between the two governments to contain insurgent activities on both sides of the border, the Shanti Bahini has found it difficult to replenish its losses. Thus, as has been the case with other ethnic groups in South Asia, the weakness of the tribal communities, the tremendous coercive powers of the state, and the decline in external support has facilitated the task of the centre in coping with the violent autonomist movement in Bangladesh.<sup>128</sup>

It has become increasingly clear that a long-term settlement of the CHT problem would need a sustained policy to assuage the tribal grievances, centring on the threat to their cultural identity, detribalisation through Bengali settlement and insufficient economic development resulting in their alienation from their land, economic life and cultural roots.<sup>129</sup>

Although since 1992, the ceasefire has remained in place and negotiations with the government have continued, the coming to power of the Awami League government under Sheikh Haseena saw a more co-ordinated effort at a negotiated settlement of the problem and ending of the two-decade-old insurgency, which by some

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<sup>127</sup>Imtiaz Ahmad, "Refugees and Security: The experience of Bangladesh," in S.D. Muni and Lok Raj Baral (eds), *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia* (New Delhi: Konarak Publishers, 1996), p. 131.

<sup>128</sup>Behera, op. cit, p. 1002

<sup>129</sup>Shah Alam, "Self-determination, Territorial Integrity and Ethnicity," in Iftekharuzzaman (ed.), op. cit., p. 207.

estimates, had taken some 20,000 innocent lives.<sup>130</sup> A 68-point agreement was signed between the Bangladesh government and PCJSS on 2 December 1997 to give regional autonomy to the CHT tribals.<sup>131</sup> The accord has been made under the ambit of the constitution, upholding the political, social, cultural and economic rights of all citizens, including the tribals in the CHT. Under the agreement, the Shanti Bahini have consented to surrender their arms within a specified time, and the government has agreed to give general amnesty to all armed members. The temporary camps of the army in the Hill districts would be dismantled in phases, following the return of tribal insurgents to normal life.<sup>132</sup> But the government has also made it clear that it would not remove the army or Bengali settlers from the Hill regions.

Although the accord remains in place, the unfavourable response of the main opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) on the issue underlines the need for more sustained efforts to evolve a national consensus to fulfil the long-term aspirations of the tribals for substantive devolution of powers within the framework of regional autonomy. The BNP, led by former prime minister Khaleeda Zia, remains opposed to the accord, which it sees as undermining the sovereignty of the country.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>*The Hindu*, 8 December 1997.

<sup>131</sup>The historic accord, signed after protracted negotiations between government representatives and tribal leaders, envisages a Regional Council - with a five year tenure - with two-thirds of its 22 members elected by the tribal people, to supervise and co-ordinate public administration, law and order and developmental activities in the hill districts.

<sup>132</sup> See *Bangladesh Observer* (Dhaka) 3 December 1997. Also see *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), 3 December 1997.

<sup>133</sup>*The Times of India* (New Delhi), 12 June 1998.



After sixteen years of military rule, Bangladesh became a democracy in 1991. But the challenges continue. At the heart of a long-term solution lie the larger questions of accommodating the Bangladeshi identity in the face of cultural distinctiveness of smaller minority groups. The nation is yet to find a middle ground between linguo-centric secularism and its distinctive Islamic identity.<sup>134</sup>

### *Lessons from the South Asian Experience*

A number of observations can be made from the foregoing discussion. After independence most states grappled with fundamental issues of institutional development and distribution of political power as a nation-state, with some more willing than others to recognise and accommodate ethnic, linguistic and religious differences. The quest for a unified nation-state led to the adoption of different strategies for fostering a sense of nationhood among ethnically and linguistically diverse groups in the region.

This has not necessarily been achieved. South Asia is replete with examples of groups demanding autonomy for themselves on the basis of language and culture; access to education, civil service employment, social services, land and territory; control over natural and fiscal resources, and representative local government structures. As mentioned earlier, the dynamics of ethnic polarisation and politics depends essentially on four variables: persistence of unequal distribution of resources; degree of evolution of ethnic consciousness into organisation of a political movement; the government's

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<sup>134</sup>M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh at 26: Encountering Bifurcated History and a Divided National Identity," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 3, Spring 1998, p. 54.

response to ethnic demands; and the general political context.<sup>135</sup> In South Asia conflicts are influenced by these factors. They are also moulded by particular circumstances to serve the interests of idealists and ideologues, visionaries and opportunists, political leaders and ethnic power brokers of various kinds.<sup>136</sup>

At times, ethnic identities compete with the "national identity" because the national ideology which attempts to subsume such national identities is in fact itself ethnocentric. This is well-illustrated in the case of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. India does not have any identifiable ruling group, which gives it an edge over its neighbours. India's democratic system has enabled its regional political economies and electoral processes to maintain greater resilience against central interference, unlike Pakistan, where there appears to be less room for manoeuvre.<sup>137</sup> India functions in an essentially plural social tradition in which the governmental structure provides only one among many centres.

Every South Asian state has witnessed the rise of ethnic sentiments but what vary significantly are the strategies employed by the states to contain the crises. If autonomy is granted at an early stage and respected by the state, there are good chances of defusing the separatist tendency. The situation with Tamil speakers in India is a case in point. At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that ethnic movements become secessionist when demands for larger autonomy or other grievances of minority or ethnic groups have not received

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<sup>135</sup>Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, op.cit., pp. 41-68. Also see Paul Brass "Ethnicity and Nationality Formation," *Ethnicity*, Vol. 3, September 1976, p. 226.

<sup>136</sup>Paul Brass *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 285.

<sup>137</sup>Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, op. cit., p. 200.

sensitive or timely political attention. This is particularly true of some movements in South Asia, which if handled in a more accommodating manner, might not have become as militant and intractable as they are today. For instance, the imposition of central rule, a mismatched alliance between Congress-I and the National Conference, rigged elections in 1987 and the maladministration of Farooq Abdullah contributed to alienating the people of Kashmir in India and to the escalation of militancy. Similarly, in Sri Lanka the Tamil leadership adhered to its autonomist demand all through the 1950s and 1960s and it was only in the face of continued intransigence by the Sri Lankan government that they adopted a militant posture in 1972.

According to James Manor, awakening and decay are the two factors responsible for the present crisis in India.<sup>138</sup> But this argument can be extended to the political climate of the region as a whole. Awakening, in some respects, has entailed a gradual development among all groups and fostered a sense of political maturity and an understanding of representative politics in the region. But this has happened when the states themselves are in decay and have become less able to respond to such challenges, leading to greater conflicts and violence. Pushed further, these have assumed separatist overtones.

Although a framework of dispersed, diffused sovereignties under a loose confederal arrangement is a viable option in multinational states, it may not be acceptable to most nation-states. Moreover, redrawing the map of nations cannot solve questions of peace and

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<sup>138</sup>James Manor, "Collective Conflict in India," *Conflict Studies*, 212, June 1988, pp. 2-3.

reconciliation if it fails to take note of the multiple identities and fluidity, flexibility and mutability of the process of identity formation. As is evident in the case of East Bengal, or the Chakmas in Bangladesh, the liberated minorities of today could turn into the oppressed majorities of tomorrow in the new states. As noted by Akram H. Chowdhury, "Elites elsewhere, once in charge of governments, have forgotten their own struggles and have used the tools of repression borrowed from their adversaries."<sup>139</sup>

It seems indisputable, however, that if the state is to survive it all, it must seek a rapprochement with the forces of mass nationalism.<sup>140</sup> As has already been pointed out, ethnic conflicts and upheavals are not caused by pursuit of self-determination but denial of self-determination in the absence of effective political and legal institutions in a truly democratic framework. As expressed by Ayesha Jalal, "A renegotiation of the powers of the centre with its varied constituent units would seem to be the most sensible way towards the resolution of South Asia's centre-region conflicts."<sup>141</sup>

At the internal level, decentralisation of state and society are prerequisites for finding lasting solutions. At the same time, the establishment of regional stability and order may have a benign influence on the centre-regional relationships in South Asia. The multiplicity of identities can function as a boon rather than a threat to democracy and improve the prospects of mutual understanding and

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<sup>139</sup> Akram H. Chowdhury, "Self-Determination: The Chittagong and Bangladesh," in David P. Forsythe (ed.), *Human Rights and Development* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989), p. 300.

<sup>140</sup> Robert A. Dahl, "Democracy, Majority rule and Gorbachev's Referendum," *Dissent* Fall, 1991, pp. 491-96.

<sup>141</sup> Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, op. cit., p. 228.

cooperation in the region. In the following chapters we will examine these issues in the specific contexts of the Baluch in Pakistan and the Sikhs in India.

### Chapter 3

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASES OF THE BALUCH IN PAKISTAN AND THE SIKHS IN INDIAN PUNJAB

This chapter looks at the socio-economic histories of the Baluch and Khalistan movements and studies their impact on the political system. The two movements differ from each other in more ways than one. The Baluch, constituting a mere four percent of Pakistan's population, are a nomadic community, with low literacy rates and even lower levels of socio-economic development. The Sikhs, on the other hand, are a settled agricultural community with one of the highest per capita incomes in India, and followers of Sikhism, a faith distinct from Hinduism, which is the faith of the majority of the people in India. What is striking, however, is that despite the vast disparity in economic growth and development, and variations in social structure, both groups wanted to secede from their respective countries.

The Baluch represent, to a certain extent, a case of internal colonialism and relative deprivation. Their ethnic mobilisation can be explained on the basis of their perceptions of being turned into a colony within Pakistan, and the feelings of relative deprivation *vis-a-vis* other ethnic groups such as the Punjabis at the federal level and the Pushtuns at the provincial level. The Sikhs, on the other hand, were disillusioned by the political and economic policies of the Indian state with regard to Punjab. But unlike the Baluch, mobilisation of these grievances along religious lines by the state and central elites

was a major factor contributing to the rise of the Khalistan movement.

## **The Baluch in Pakistan**

### *Origins*

The tribal groups known as the Baluch are found mainly in the region stretching from Western Pakistan to Eastern Iran. They have a history going back almost two thousand years, but very little is known about their origin because most of their history has been preserved in an oral and undated form, without being substantiated by documented evidence.

According to the Daptar Sha'ar (a chronicle of genealogies and an ancient ballad of Baluch tribes), the Baluch and Kurds were kindred branches of the tribe that migrated eastwards from Aleppo (now in Syria), in search of water and fresh pasture lands, shortly before the time of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The Western viewpoint is that the Baluch were first identified as inhabiting an area in North-western Iran, adjacent to the southern coasts of the Caspian Sea.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless both the Baluch and the Western scholars agree that the Baluch moved into the coastal areas along the southern shores of the Caspian Sea and later migrated to Iran and Pakistani Baluchistan between the sixth and fourteenth centuries. The origin of the Baluch remains a mystery. Most theories regard the Baluch as original inhabitants of the land or as descendants

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<sup>1</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow, Soviet Temptations and Baluch Nationalism* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981) p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Robert G. Wirsing, *The Baluchis and Pathans*, Minority Rights Group Report no 48 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1987), p. 4.

of the Turkman branch of the Altaic group, the Iranian and Indian branches of the Aryans, or the Arab and Chaldean branches of the Semitic group.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to categorise a typical Baluch, since most tribes have been mixed with different ethnic and racial groups and in appearance exhibit mixed characteristics.

### *History and Society*

In terms of their history and social beliefs, the Baluch have been remarkably successful in preserving a distinct identity of their own. They take great pride in their language, folklore traditions and value systems, which serve as a binding force for all the Baluch scattered in Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Reliving their past through books, magazines and folk traditions, the Baluch revel in glorifying the achievements of their national heroes and are very conscious of their historical antecedents and cultural traditions.

The first nation builder cited in Baluch historical accounts is Mir Chakar Rind, who ruled from the Makran coast to the present day Marri area in the South of Quetta from 1487 to 1511. Though his kingdom was destroyed by a civil war between the Rinds and Lasharis, he is supposed to have made a valiant effort to unite the Baluch.<sup>4</sup> He was hailed as a Baluch Attila, and his army's exploits during the Rind-Lashari war are idealised as the Iliad of the Baluch race.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For details see Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan - A Study of Baluchistan* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987), pp. 36-41; for the Chaldean origin see Sardar Muhammad Khan Baluch, *History of Baluch Race and Baluchistan* (Karchi: Process Pakistan, 1958), pp. 16-18; 22-25.

<sup>4</sup>M. Longworth Dames, *The Baluch Race: A Historical and Etymological Sketch* (London: 1904), p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Mohammad Khan Baluch, *op. cit.*, p. 48.



Mir Chakar's death was followed by several attempts on the part of the Mughal empire to control the Baluch who were, however, able to preserve their independence. In 1666, the Ahmedzai tribe established the Kalat confederacy. But the Ahmedzai Khans, being little more than tribal chiefs, exercised practically no power beyond twenty to thirty miles from Kalat proper.<sup>6</sup> Abdullah Khan, who ascended the throne in AD 1713, was the first chief of the Ahmedzai branch who claimed allegiance of Baluch tribes scattered from Kandahar (Afghanistan) across the Makran area to Bandar Abbas (now Iran). He could, however, do little to knit the areas under his military control into a unified state.<sup>7</sup> This task was accomplished by the sixth Khan of Kalat, Nasir Khan, who ascended the throne in 1741. His most notable achievement was the creation of a unified Baluch army of 25,000 men and 1,000 camels and a sort of a centralised bureaucratic administrative structure. This comprised a wazir (prime minister) and two legislative councils, consisting of a lower chamber chosen by the tribes and an upper chamber of elders who served in an advisory capacity.<sup>8</sup>

Nasir Khan continued to pay tributes to the Persian emperor, Nadir Khan, till 1747 and after his death to Ahmed Shah Durrani till 1758.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, although remaining an ally of Afghanistan, Kalat enjoyed a sovereign status till the arrival of the British. For most Baluch, Nasir Khan's achievements remain an all important symbol of a unified Baluch identity and his sense of justice, wisdom, personal integrity and dutifulness immortalised him in the annals of Baluch

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<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Khan Baluch, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>7</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Yu.V. Gankovsky, *The Peoples of Pakistan* (Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1971), p. 151.

history. His tomb at Kalat is still visited by many Baluch as a reminder of their glorious past.<sup>10</sup>

*Baluch under the British.*

The coming of the British was a turning point in the history of the Baluch, who fought against them for more than forty years before Kalat was subdued in 1876. Baluchistan acquired a new significance for the British, because, as a key area flanking Afghanistan, it could act as a buffer state between the Indian empire and Russia. The British divided the Baluch area into seven parts in order to control the tribal areas. One quarter of the land was given to Persia in the far west in 1871; a portion was given to Afghanistan in the north in 1894; and in British India, the Baluch areas were divided into a centrally administered enclave (known as British Baluchistan), the Kalat confederacy, and three smaller puppet principalities.<sup>11</sup> The British obtained formal rights to station troops in return for subsidies to sardars who were granted autonomy over their respective tribes. The sardari system continues to determine the social and political structure of the Baluch tribes to the present day.

*Social and political structure of Baluch tribes*

The sardari system forms the basis of the tribal organisation in Baluchistan and the North Western Frontier Province. The British chose sardars to exercise absolute autonomy over the tribes and function as intermediaries between them and the British

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<sup>10</sup>Mohammad Khan Baluch, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>11</sup>Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow* op. cit., p. 19.

government.<sup>12</sup> The Baluch are made up of seventeen major tribal groups and some four hundred sub-groupings. All the major tribal groups are headed by a sardar who exercise considerable authority over their tribesman. A tribe or *tuman* was further divided into clans called *phara* and sub clans (*phalli*). While the tribe was headed by a *tumandar* or a sardar, the clan was under a *muquaddam*, below whom were the *waderas*, and *takkrees*. Some of the important Baluch and Brahui tribes in Baluchistan include the Marris, Bugtis, Legharis, Magassi, Mengals, Bizenjo, Kambrani, Raisanis, Rind, Gichki, Buledi, and the Bander tribes.<sup>13</sup>

A sardar was responsible for the protection of his tribesman in return for their unquestioned loyalty towards him. He also settled disputes, gave jobs to members of his tribe and, broadly, controlled their social and political lives by performing all executive, legislative and judicial functions. This patronage extended by the sardar established political clientship ties between him and his tribesmen on the one hand, and between the smaller and bigger leaders in the tribal hierarchy, on the other<sup>14</sup> making for the virtual dominance of the sardar and his section leaders (*muquaddams*, *waderas*, *takkrees*) over the rest of the tribe. This was in direct contrast to the Pushtun tribes, which were organised along kinship ties rather than political hierarchies allowing for a more egalitarian structure, at least in principle, than the Baluch.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Philip C. Salzman, "Continuity and Change in Baluchi Tribal leadership," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4, 1973, pp. 428-39.

<sup>13</sup>For details, see Inayatullah Baluch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, op. cit., pp. 46-49.

<sup>14</sup>Fredrick Barth, "Ethnic Processes on the Pathan-Baluch Boundary," in Fredrick Barth (ed.), *Features of Person and Society in Swat, Collected Essays on Pathans*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 99.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Wirsing, *The Baluchis and Pathans*, op. cit., p. 7.

The sardars were placed under the overall supervision of a political agent who was the final arbiter of all internal disputes between the sardars and their subsidiary agents and kept a watchful eye over the sardar.<sup>16</sup> Thus while the stature of the sardar grew within the tribal community, his authority outside it was circumscribed considerably by the British.

This perpetuated an insular form of tribal consciousness which inhibited political and social integration on a larger scale. Backward forms of social organisation were maintained deliberately to reinforce the domination of the Baluch elite, who feared that such a development could cut into their own power base.<sup>17</sup> Since the pattern of land ownership was weighted in favour of sardars and *jagirdars*, who imposed arbitrary taxes on the tenants and labourers (there was no uniform system of taxation), most of the tenants and labourers remained below subsistence level while the agricultural surplus was being appropriated by the sardars and their intermediaries.<sup>18</sup>

According to one analysis,

the sardar is a mere parasite whose use of the surplus is antagonistic to the process which produces the surplus. He is thus incapable of propelling the next phase of development, namely the bourgeois phase, precisely because his activities generate not a progress in agriculture and hence a larger surplus, but stagnation and consequently narrowing margins of surpluses.<sup>19</sup>

Even though the formal abolition of the sardari system in May 1976, stood to deprive the sardars of their privy purses and compensation

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<sup>16</sup>Aijaz Ahmed, "The National Question in Baluchistan," in Feroz Ahmed (ed.), *Focus on Baluchistan and Pushtun Question* (Lahore: Peoples Publishing House, 1975), p. 21. Also see Khalid bin Sayeed, *Pakistan - Nature and Direction of Change* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), p. 114.

<sup>17</sup>Yu V. Gankovsky, *Peoples of Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>18</sup>Aijaz Ahmed, "The National Question," op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

and restored the lands from the sardars to the tribes, the sardars retained their *de facto* control over the tribes because as tribal chiefs and feudal lords, they still owned a lot of land. The sardari system is so deeply rooted in the political and social psyche of the Baluch that despite the decline in their power, the sardars continue to be respected within their tribes even to this day.

### *Social organisation*

The Baluch follow a patriarchal form of society where political rights in the tribe and inheritance of tribal estates are transmitted through the male progeny. The social conduct of most Baluch revolves around the *Baluch Mayar* (code of honour) which constitutes an important part of the Baluch psyche and serves as a valuable guide to their life. It is also a symbol of the Baluch national identity, bringing it into direct confrontation with the government who refuse to accept it as a law. The essence of the *Baluch Mayar* lies in the values of *Laj* (shame); *Ghairat* (self respect); *Izzat* (honour); *Nang* and *Namus* which means revenge.<sup>20</sup> In their religious orientation, the Baluch are basically secular. The society is made up of a Sunni Muslim majority, minority groups of Hindus, Zoroastrians, Jews, Ismailies and Khojas, and a religious sect of Zikhris,<sup>21</sup> who are centred mostly along the Makran

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<sup>20</sup>Inayatullah Baluch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, op. cit., p. 80. According to the *Baluch Mayar*, any crime (*hun*) which is committed against an individual, including murder, has to be avenged by the individual or his family and clan. Other important pillars of the *Baluch Mayar* are *Bahut* (refuge) which makes it obligatory for every Baluch to protect the life of any person seeking refuge with him; the concept of *Mehmani* or hospitality which has to be extended by all Baluch at all costs, regardless of the expenses incurred; and *Siahkari* which fixes death as the punishment for an adulterer (*Kala*) and adulteress (*Kali*), who are denied the status of a *bahut*. For details see Emma Duncan, *Breaking the Curfew - A Political Journey Through Pakistan* (London: Viking Penguin, 1989), p. 143.

<sup>21</sup>The Zikhris derive their name from the central feature of their ritual - Zikr or repetitive chants of the name of God. For details see Stephen Pastner, "Feuding With The Spirit among the Zikri Baluch: The Saint as a Champion of the Despised," in

coast and make up 10-20 percent of the Baluch population. The Zikhris revere Prophet Muhammad who is considered the last and greatest prophet by Sunni Muslims, but believe that he is superseded by another messiah, Nur Pak, who will return at the apocalypse (*akhir zaman*) or last days to restore what Zikhris believe is true Islam, which has been perverted by Sunnis or Namazis (people of prayer).<sup>22</sup>

Unlike the Pushtun society, which is steeped in the traditional ethos of Islam,<sup>23</sup> the Baluch are not bound by the formal trappings of religion. The secular temperament of the Baluch allows a relatively peaceful coexistence of the various religious communities in Baluchistan. According to one estimate, 10,000 Hindus settled mainly in Loralai, Chaman, Sinjari, Harnai and Quetta over the centuries have been accepted into the Baluch tribal system and have their own subsections such as the Marhata Bugtis or Marhata Marris.

### *Language and literature*

Language has played an important role in defining the nationalist identity of the Baluch. The main language of the Baluch, Baluchi, is believed to have originated between 200BC and AD 700 and is classified as a branch of the Iranian group of the Indo-European

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Akbar Ahmed and David Hart (eds), *Islam in Tribal Societies from the Atlas to the Indus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

<sup>22</sup>The Zikhris differ from the Muslims by making a pilgrimage to Koh-e-Murad - a mountain situated a few miles from Turbat city in Mekran, instead of taking a Haj to Mecca, and also deny other pillars of Islam (Namaz, Roza and Zakat).

<sup>23</sup>Akbar Ahmed, "Religious Presence and Symbolism in Pukhtun Society" in Akbar Ahmed and David Hart (eds), *Islam in Tribal Societies from the Atlas to the Indus*, op. cit., p. 313.

family.<sup>24</sup> Comprising as many as six dialects, it is spoken mainly in Baluchistan by almost one-third of the population.<sup>25</sup> The second major language spoken by the Baluch is Brahui. It contains Dravidian syntactical and lexical elements and is almost indistinguishable from Baluchi, with only 25 percent of words of Dravidian origin. Since its literature is not well-developed, it remains a variant of the Baluchi language, though its script is different from Baluchi.

Baluchi was used in an oral form in earlier times, since Persian was the official written language; it was only in the 19th century that Baluchi was introduced as a written language. By the late 19th century, Nastaliq (Persian script) and Naskh (Arabic script) were adopted to develop the language further. Nastaliq is an elaborate calligraphic script not accepted by most Baluch writers who have advocated the use of Roman letters to help in the standardisation of the Baluch language.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the Baluch literature has survived in a crude form by word of mouth from one generation to another. It is mainly in the form of poetry and prose. Baluch poetry is simple and direct in expression and consists mostly of romantic ballads, love songs, heroic or war ballads,

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<sup>24</sup>Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch, *Inside Baluchistan, Political Autobiography of Khan-E-Azam, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1975) p. 213.

<sup>25</sup>Six dialects spoken are Eastern Hill, Rakshani, Sarawani, Kachhi, Lotuni and Coastal; the chief ones being the Eastern dialect spoken from Karachi northwards to Dera Ismail Khan and the Suleiman mountains and including the Marri Bugti areas, and the Western dialect spoken between Karachi and Kirman (Iran). The Eastern dialect has a heavy admixture of Sindhi, Seraiki and Pushtu words and is spoken by the Baluch of Sindh, Derajat in Punjab and NWFP in Pakistan, while the Western dialect has borrowed generously from Persian, Arabic and the Turkish language. Also see Inayatullah Baluch, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, op. cit., p. 213.

<sup>26</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., pp. 186-87.

religious poetry, short poems and modern national poetry.<sup>27</sup> The prose is mostly in the form of folk tales or modern literature.

Neither Baluchi nor Brahui bears any affinity with the languages of the Indian subcontinent; and this distinctiveness has contributed immensely to the growth of national consciousness among the Baluch and to their demand for self-determination. In the post-partition period, especially after the 1960s and 1970s, when the Baluch were involved in serious conflicts with the Pakistani state, the nationalist movement found its strongest expression in literature and journalism. Baluch leaders who fought against the federal governments became literary heroes. For example, Nauroz Khan, a leader of the Zehri tribe, who fought against the Pakistani army in October 1958, was given the status of a national hero when, after agreeing to a truce, he was imprisoned for defying federal authority.

One of the major grievances of the Baluch intelligentsia has been that Baluchi has not been given official patronage and Urdu has been imposed on them.<sup>28</sup> However, even though the government has pursued a confrontationist policy towards the Baluch, it has allowed some concessions on the literary front. A Baluchi Academy was established in 1961 in Quetta to promote the language. Important Baluch publications included monthly journals like *Oman*, the first in the Baluchi language established in 1951; *Ulus*, *Nokeen Daur*, *Taptan*,

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<sup>27</sup>For details see Syed Abdul Quddus, *The Tribal Baluchistan* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 1990), pp. 70-71.

<sup>28</sup>In 1993 there were only five Baluchi newspapers or periodicals and four in Brahui as compared to 76 newspapers and periodicals in Urdu. See Tariq Rahman, "The Balochi/Brahvi Language Movements in Pakistan," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 3, Spring 1996, p. 86.



*Chagird*, and *Aasap*.<sup>29</sup> Another source of literary output has been the expatriate Baluch community which brought out journals like *Shwaz* (Quest), printed in Baluchi, Persian, and English; and *Mayar* and *Bahut* from Norway and Sweden respectively.<sup>30</sup>

### *Demographic composition*

The Baluch make up only a small percentage of Pakistan's overall population.<sup>31</sup> The census figures of 1981 do not give an estimate of the Baluch as such but give a breakdown of the population of Pakistan on the basis of the languages spoken in the country. On the basis of the linguistic data, (if one assumes the Baluch to comprise the Baluchi and Brahui speakers), they account for 4.2 percent of the entire population. Punjabi is the most widely spoken language (48.17 percent); followed by speakers of Pushtu (13.15 percent); Sindhi (11.77 percent); Seraiki<sup>32</sup> (9.84 percent); Urdu (7.6 percent) and other languages (5.24 percent.) See Table 3.1.

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<sup>29</sup>Abbas Jalbani, "The Baluch Renaissance," *The Herald* (Karachi), December 1992, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>31</sup> The population figures for Baluch vary considerably because of discrepancies between official estimates and nationalist claims in Pakistan. For details see Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>32</sup>The Seraiki speakers are centred in Bahawalpur, Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan of the Punjab state and have a mixed Punjabi and Sindhi cultural heritage.

Table 3.1 Percentage of Household by Language Spoken and Rural/Urban Areas, 1981<sup>33</sup>

Area	Urdu	Punjabi	Pushtu	Sindhi	Baluchi	Brahui	Hindko	Seraiiki	Others
All areas	7.60	48.17	13.15	11.77	3.02	1.21	2.43	9.84	2.81
Rural	1.33	47.52	15.05	13.77	3.50	1.49	2.77	11.97	2.60
Urban	24.40	49.92	8.04	6.43	1.74	0.45	1.53	4.12	3.37

*The Baluch in Baluchistan; socio-economic development*

Baluchistan, which is the traditional homeland of most Baluch and Brahuīs, is the most backward province of Pakistan. It occupies an area of approximately 1,34,000 square miles, which is 40 percent of Pakistan's land area.<sup>34</sup> However, its arid landscape of rugged mountains and deserts, extreme weather conditions, sparse vegetation and scanty rainfall makes it one of the most thinly populated regions in the world. The total population of the Baluchistan province at the time of the 1981 census was 4.305 million: a mere 5.14 percent of the population of Pakistan.

A comparison with other provinces reveals that it is the poorest and most underdeveloped province of Pakistan, despite occupying a vast

<sup>33</sup>*The 1981 Census Report of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Population Census Organisation, Statistical Division, Govt. of Pakistan, 1984), p. 18.

<sup>34</sup>Aijaz Ahmed, "The National Question in Baluchistan," in Feroz Ahmed (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

land area, with significant natural resources and a huge potential for development. Baluchistan has huge reserves of oil, gas, minerals, fisheries etc which have not been exploited to the full. It is the largest supplier of coal and accounted for 930,850 tonnes (more than 50 percent) of the 1,854,514 tonnes produced in the country in 1982-83. Similarly of the total natural gas produced in the country Baluchistan produces more than 75 percent.<sup>35</sup>

Socio-economic growth indicators such as literacy, health facilities, civic amenities, industrial infrastructure and per capita income point to its extremely backward status. In 1990, the literacy rate of Baluchistan was just 11 percent as against 36 percent for Punjab, 33 percent for Sindh and 19 percent for North Western Frontier Province (NWFP).<sup>36</sup> The per capita income of the province in 1976 stood at Rs 541 with the NWFP, Sindh and the Punjab's per capita incomes being Rs. 602, Rs. 788 and Rs. 797 respectively. (See Table 3.2).

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<sup>35</sup>Figures taken from *Fifty Years of Pakistan in Statistics, Vol(1982-97)* Federal Bureau of Statistics ( Government of Pakistan, Karachi, 1997), p. 141.

<sup>36</sup>See Nasir Tabil, "Education in Pakistan-Past dilemmas and Future Prospects," in Henry Korson (ed.), *Contemporary Problems of Pakistan* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993),p. 84.

Table 3.2 Distribution of economic power between the provinces in Pakistan<sup>37</sup>

	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Baluchista n	Total
Population 1972 (million)	37.5	14.0	10.8	2.4	64.7
% of total	58.0	21.6	16.7	3.7	100.0
GDP 1972 (Rs billion)	29.9	11.2	6.5	1.3	48.9
% of total	61.1	22.9	13.3	2.7	100.0
Per capita income(Rs)	797.0	788.0	602.0	541.0	756.0
Food grain output (million tons)	7.8	2.4	1.2	0.2	11.6
% of total	67.2	20.7	10.3	1.7	100.00
Value of industrial output (Rs billion)	3.8	1.5	0.3	0.2	5.8
% of total	65.5	25.9	5.2	3.4	100.00

<sup>37</sup>Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan under Bhutto, 1971-77* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), Table 5.1, p. 44.

Similarly life expectancy in rural Baluchistan was only 42 years as against a national average of 60.<sup>38</sup> The number of hospitals, dispensaries, maternity and child welfare centres is far less than other provinces. In 1983 there were only 37 hospitals in Baluchistan as opposed to 239 in Punjab; 206 in Sindh; and 144 in N.W.F.P. As shown in table 3.3, the number remained low even for subsequent years.

Table 3.3 Province-wise distribution of hospitals, maternity and child welfare centres, and dispensaries.<sup>39</sup>

Province	Hospitals		Maternity & Child Welfare Centres		Dispensaries	
	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985
Punjab	239	246	467	449	1156	1138
Sindh	210	217	138	146	1394	1459
N.W.F. P	145	149	129	130	559	541
Baluchistan	39	40	53	53	277	277

Besides the lack of medical facilities in the province, electricity is available to less than 10 percent of the people and only two cities have piped water. There are fewer than 10,000 telephone connections in the entire province, and Quetta accounts for more than half of these connections.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Robert G. Wirsing, "South Asia: The Baluch Frontier Tribes of Pakistan," in Robert G. Wirsing (ed.), *Protection of Ethnic Minorities: Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981), p. 18.

<sup>39</sup>Figures taken from *Fifty Years of Pakistan in Statistics Vol. (1982-97)* Federal Bureau of Statistics (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, 1997), pp. 320-21.

<sup>40</sup>Aabha Dixit, "Ethno-National Feelings Increase in Baluchistan," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.14, no.11, Feb 1992, p. 1273.

There is hardly any infrastructure to support industry and other employment-generating projects. In fact, the entire system is affected by a vicious circle. There is almost no private sector because of the lack of investment and there is no investment because of the absence of a basic infrastructure to promote industry. Until 1975, there were no more than eight industrial enterprises in Baluchistan, of which six were located in Quetta.<sup>41</sup>

Most Baluch practice a mix of nomadic pastoralism and settled agriculture to earn a living. But agricultural production is so low that it cannot sustain even two-thirds of the population. The Baluch percentage of national food grain output in 1972 was a mere 1.7 percent as against 67.2 percent for Punjab, 20.7 percent for Sindh and 10.3 percent for NWFP.<sup>42</sup>

The neglect and underdevelopment of Baluchistan can be explained by a number of factors which have worked together to arrest the processes of change and development in the province. Although some Baluch leaders remained sympathetic to the federal government and cooperated with them, majority of the Baluch remained isolated from the centre. The Baluch feel that Baluchistan has been turned into a virtual colony by the federal governments in which the centre has been enjoying the lion's share of profits from the state's resources without diverting any of the benefits to the province itself for the upliftment of the people. They also blame the backwardness of their province on the tardiness of the federal government in harnessing the natural resources of Baluchistan.

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<sup>41</sup>Aijaz Ahmed, "Baluchistan's Agrarian Question," in Feroz Ahmed (ed.), *Focus on the Baluch and Pushtoon Question*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>42</sup>Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan under Bhutto*, op. cit., p. 44.

According to Selig Harrison, the delay in completing projects can be attributed to the inaccessibility of the mountainous regions and the disproportionately high cost of extracting and transporting minerals located there. However, he believes that there is little doubt that Baluchistan gets much less favourable shares of certain revenues such as gas and petroleum royalties, than other provinces in Pakistan.<sup>43</sup>

The Sui gas fields in Baluchistan provide more than 75 percent of Pakistan's total gas production. The gas provides energy for running 30 percent of the industries in the country and saves an estimated \$275 million per year in foreign exchange. Yet royalties to the Baluchistan state treasury from Sui gas production totalled only \$1.23 million in 1979-80.<sup>44</sup> Even Sindh had a rate of 22 square feet fixed as royalty in comparison to 5 per square feet of royalty earmarked for the Baluch.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the Sui gas supply to Quetta started only as late as 1980.<sup>46</sup>

The Baluch claim that the majority of the developmental projects get stalled or delayed because the federal government does not actually desire the development of Baluchistan. In the past, an important mineral development, the Saindak Integrated Mineral Project, wound up because of reduced budgetary allocations. While the government maintained that the Saindak project was being reviewed to reascertain its economic viability, the Baluch were of the view that it should be seen not merely as a commercial enterprise but as a means to generate employment in the mining industry.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>45</sup>*Muslim*, 23 October 1992.

<sup>46</sup>*Pakistan Opinion Trends and Analyses (POT) (Pakistan Series)*, Vol.13, Part.147, 5 August 1985, p. 2862.

<sup>47</sup>*POT (Pakistan series)*, Vol.12, Part 16, 23 January 1984, pp. 252-54.

Historically Pushtun, Sindhi, and Punjabi merchants have maintained control over the commercial life in Quetta, the only urbanised part of Baluchistan. The Ayub regime parcelled out land in the fertile tracts of the Pat Feeder area to Punjabi military and civil bureaucrats. The area, which was part of the Kalat State Union, was upgraded and given the status of a district in 1965. Under Z.A Bhutto, all the land in the Pat feeder subdivision was treated as state land. Some 30,000 acres were reserved for defence personnel; and the remainder was to be divided between those who were in continuous possession of the land since 1953; tenants in cultivating position; and landless peasants.<sup>48</sup> However, possession of the land by government servants and influential landlords has worked to the detriment of the actual owners and tenants. The Baluch feel that the government servants of other provinces should not be allowed to acquire land in the area.

Adding to the Baluch frustration is the fact that of the 21 established and registered units in Baluchistan practically all are owned by non-Baluch. In fact, barring a few projects like Pat feeder, RCD highway and the setting up of industrial units at Hub Chowki, no major project has been launched by the centre. But even the setting up of industry at Hub Chowki, a non-Baluch area, 14 miles from Karachi, is seen as a ploy by the government to exploit the province's resources under the guise of industrialising it. Most of the industries set up by the public sector, like the Lasbella textile mill and the Bolan textile mills, folded up for want of infrastructure and because of financial constraints.

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<sup>48</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol. 6, Part 187, 23 August 1978, p. 1827.



Baluch feelings of mistrust and relative deprivation have been one of the most significant factors in mobilising their socio-economic demands for a separate homeland. *Jabal*, the official organ of one of the political parties, the Baluch People's Liberation Front (BPLF), stated that

In Islamabad's calculations, Baluchistan is a vast estate for plunder, an arid desert floating on oils and minerals. A large part of their political strategy is dictated by the desire to extract this treasure for the benefit of the Pakistan bureaucratic bourgeoisie and foreign imperialist interests.<sup>49</sup>

Efforts by the federal government to create a modern infrastructure, improve the means of communication and develop the province have not had the desired effect on the Baluch. They feel that instead of promoting development, the Pakistani federal authorities have pursued socio-economic and cultural policies to strengthen their own political base. The construction of roads was viewed as an extension the federal administrative machinery to exercise control over the Baluch, penetrate their guerrilla strongholds and open their province to outsiders for purposes of trade, settlement and exploitation of their resources.<sup>50</sup> The opening up of the central mountainous region of Jhalawan and Sarawan through the RCD highway connecting Karachi with Zahidan, capital of Iranian Baluchistan via Quetta; the construction of roads such as the Zhob-Waziristan, Loralai-Dera Ghazi Khan road, and Sui-Kashmore road, which served as inter-provincial link roads, was viewed with much skepticism. It was believed that the construction of these roads hardly helped to generate resources or help in the industrialisation of Baluchistan.<sup>51</sup> During Bhutto's governance, the guerrillas of Baluchistan held up the construction of

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<sup>49</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, p. 171.

<sup>50</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol.12, Part 16, 23 January, 1984, pp. 252-54.

<sup>51</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol.12, Part 16, 23 January, 1984, pp. 252

36 miles of oil-related road building for nearly five years in defiance of the government's policy to enter Baluchistan.<sup>52</sup>

Low levels of socio-economic development in Baluchistan have been compounded by the perceived deprivation of the Baluch *vis-a-vis* other ethnic groups in Pakistan, in particular the Punjabi ruling elites at the centre and the Pushtuns at the provincial level. The share of Baluch in the structures of Pakistani power-sharing and decision-making has remained minimal in both the political and economic spheres at the provincial and central levels. Their growing alienation from the national mainstream is a function of their lack of participation in the civil-military complex.

#### *Baluch representation at the political level*

The Baluch attribute their poor representation in the federal and provincial services to a deliberate policy on the part of the government to keep them out of the key administrative positions. According to one study, from 1947 to 1977, of the 179 persons who were named to central cabinets in Pakistan, only four (2.2 percent) were Baluch tribesmen from Baluchistan and only one of them was named prior to the 1980s.<sup>53</sup> Similarly of the civil employees in Baluchistan in 1972, only about 2,000 (5 percent) were Baluch and they usually occupied the lower positions in the state bureaucracy.<sup>54</sup> In the defence forces, they were as poorly represented as in the bureaucracy.

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<sup>52</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>53</sup>Shaheen Mozaffar "The Politics of Cabinet Formation in Pakistan: A study of Recruitment to the Central Cabinets, 1947-1977," (Ph.D dissertation, Miami University, Ohio, 1980). Cited in Robert G. Wirsing, *The Baluchis and Pathans*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>54</sup>Tariq Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive, The Death of a State* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 117.

The ethnic group composition of the Pakistan military corps in the 1970s was approximately: 70 percent Punjabi, 15 percent Pushtun, 10 percent Muhajir and 5 percent Baluch and Sindhi.<sup>55</sup> In the provincial services in 1979, of a total of 830 higher civil service posts, only 181 were held by the Baluch and almost all of them were minor posts.<sup>56</sup> Baluchistan has also lacked representation at important policy making levels in organisations like Pakistan International Airlines, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, State Banks and other institutions.<sup>57</sup>

The poor representation of the Baluch can be explained in some part by the quota system. The federal quota system was introduced on 31 August 1973 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for a period of twenty years to give a proportionately balanced representation to all the four provinces on the basis of their relative population strength. However, because of their small numbers, the share of the Baluch in the province-wise distribution of quotas is quite meagre.<sup>58</sup> The regional distribution of quotas from 1973 to 1983, for Grades 16 to 22 of Pakistan's bureaucracy, showed that the quota earmarked for Baluchistan was only 3.5 percent while the actual strength was down to a lower figure of 3.1 percent. (See table 3.4). Second, notwithstanding their paltry share, they are compelled to share it with the non-Baluch settlers in Baluchistan who can contest their share under the domicile clause.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Asaf Hussain, *Elite Politics in an Ideological State* (Kent: Dawson and Sons, 1979), Table 14, p. 129.

<sup>56</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nationbuilding in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 180.

<sup>57</sup>Tariq Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>58</sup>The quota system was introduced in 1949 to redress the imbalance between the two wings of Pakistan, and after the dissolution of the one-unit scheme, to ameliorate inequalities between "more developed" and "less developed" regions.

<sup>59</sup>Under the domicile clause, the domicile of each candidate determines his/her candidacy for the quota to be administered by the Federal Public Service Commission through its examination system. In Baluchistan, a *bona fide* non-local resident of the province was to be treated as local if (a) he was residing continuously in Baluchistan before 1947 or (b) if he had acquired Pakistani citizenship under the Pakistani

Table 3.4 (Officer Grades 16-22 in Pakistan's federal bureaucracy), 1973-83.<sup>60</sup>

Region	Quota	Actual Strength
Punjab	50.0	55.8
NWFP	11.5	11.6
Urban Sindh	7.6	20.2
Rural Sindh	11.4	5.1
Baluchistan	3.5	3.1
FATA & N. Areas	4.0	3.4
Azad Kashmir	2.0	0.9

The Baluch argue that their population has grown since 1972, and have been demanding an increase in their quota from 3.5 percent to 5.25 percent.<sup>61</sup> There has, however, been no change in their status.

#### *Baluch-Pushtun relations*

As mentioned earlier, the Baluch sense of ethno-nationalism has worked at two levels; at the federal level they harbour resentment against the Punjabis while at the provincial level they are in fierce competition with the Pushtuns.

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Citizenship Act, 1951 and has been residing continuously anywhere in the province since 14 October 1955 or (c) has been residing continuously in the province 12 years prior to the making of the application for being treated as a local. See *The New Times* (Rawalpindi), 13 September 1974.

<sup>60</sup>Iftikhar H. Malik, *State and Civil Society in Pakistan: Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), Table 3. 2, p. 67.

<sup>61</sup>POT, (Pakistan Series), Vol. 12, Part 3, 10 August 1884, p. 2590.

Baluchistan represents a cultural mosaic of different ethnic groups such as Baluch and Brahuis, Pushtuns, Sindhis, Punjabis, and Hazaras. In the wake of the Afghan crisis in the early 1980s, the demographic configuration of Baluchistan underwent a tremendous change with the continuing flow of Afghan refugees (Pushtuns and Hazaras) into the province. This tilted the demographic balance of the province in favour of the Pushtuns. Added to this, the continuous dispersion of the Baluch to Iran, Persian Gulf, East Africa and to other provinces of Pakistan, diluted their presence further. In terms of the percentage of the respective population of the provinces, the number of people who were abroad for the last ten years was as follows: N.W.F.P had the highest percentage (5.3) followed by Baluchistan (1.8) and approximately (1.60) each for Punjab and Sindh. (See Table 3.5) According to the last census (1981), of the total migrant population in Baluchistan (2.7 percent of the country's total), 44.3 percent moved within the province, 36.7 percent were from other provinces and 10.7 percent were from other countries.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>*The 1981 Census Report of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Population Census Organisation, Statistical Division, Government of Pakistan, 1984), p. 34.

Table 3.5 Number of People Gone Abroad During Last Ten Years-Pakistan and Provinces: 1981<sup>63</sup>

Emigrants	Total	NWFP	Punjab	Sindh	Baluchistan	Islamabad
Number	1,708, 608	591, 405	735,285	300, 354	77,126	4,438
Rate %	2.03	5.35	1.55	1.58	1.78	1.30

Prior to 1970, the Baluch and the Pushtuns fought courageously against the one unit but following the Afghanistan crisis the tensions became more apparent. The number of Afghan refugees totalled 1.8 million in 1981<sup>64</sup> and 2.86 million in 1984.<sup>65</sup> This influx has not only disturbed the balance of the local population but generated fears among the Baluch of being turned into a minority in their homeland.

The small population size of the Baluch in their own province has made it difficult for them to achieve even their rightful share of resources in their province. Both the Pushtuns and the Baluch inhabit clearly demarcated areas in Baluchistan.<sup>66</sup> The Pushtuns are concentrated in a belt stretching from Zhob, near the border with NWFP, to Quetta and have a majority in Zhob, Loralai, Pishin and Quetta. Similarly, the Baluch are concentrated in Sibi, Chagai, Kharan

<sup>63</sup>*The 1981 Census Report of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Population Census Organisation, Statistical Division, Government of Pakistan, 1984), p. 38.

<sup>64</sup>Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Impact and Legacy of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan" in Korson (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>65</sup>*The Herald*, March 1992, p. 56.

<sup>66</sup>Baluchistan was formed in 1970 by the merger of the administrative divisions of Quetta and Kalat. It comprises the following districts - Quetta Pishin (the smallest yet most developed); Sibi; Chagai; Kharan; Loralai; Zhob; Mekran; Lasbella; Kachi; and Kalat ( the largest and most populous district).

and Makran where they comprise 73 percent; 77 percent; 70 percent and 98 percent of Baluchi speaking people respectively.<sup>67</sup>

The existence of such a large Pushtun population in Baluchistan has brought the Baluch in direct conflict with Pushtuns over a number of issues such as employment, land, business, and control and use of grazing fields. It is believed that nearly 80 percent of all government jobs go to non-Baluch. The Baluch have a very small middle class which has only recently ventured into business in Baluchistan. But in the case of the Pushtuns, the booming smuggling and arms trade has made the Pushtun middle class more prosperous than the Baluch. In fact most business sectors like construction and transport are mainly in the hands of the Pushtuns, who also provide labour for the ship-breaking industry in Gadani.<sup>68</sup> Besides these, the Pushtun and Baluch also compete for the ownership of coal mines.<sup>69</sup> All these factors have alienated the Baluch from the Pushtuns in Baluchistan.

The shortage of basic amenities such as water, power, and roads has set both the communities clamouring for a larger share of resources for themselves. For example, the Baluch claim that 80 percent of the provincial budget is awarded to the Pushtun areas which are more advanced.<sup>70</sup> The Pushtuns, meanwhile, allege that the Pushtun areas have been discriminated against by successive governments.<sup>71</sup> They also claim that the districts and divisions in Baluchistan have also been carved out in favour of the Baluch. On the cultural front, the

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<sup>67</sup>Hafeez Malik, "The Afghan Crisis and its Impact on Pakistan," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 3, Spring 1982, p. 43.

<sup>68</sup>Shahid Kardar, *The Political Economy of Pakistan* (Lahore:Progressive Publishers, 1987), p. 9.

<sup>69</sup>*The Herald*, March 1992, p. 62.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

Pushtun tribes have been complaining against the imposition of Baluchi or Brahui on Pushtun primary school children while Urdu remains the medium of instruction in Quetta and Sibi.<sup>72</sup> They say that the provincial decision to impart primary education in the Pushtu language has not been implemented as yet.

Though there are many divisions within the closed tribal structures of the Baluch, in terms of class contradictions, religious differences, linguistic variations, population dispersion and low levels of socio-economic development, the Baluch are very proud of their distinct identity, underpinned by the strength of their community bonds and tribal affiliations. It is their sense of identity that has sustained their desire for national self-determination, and has been a constant source of friction between them and the federal government.

While there is no doubt that there is a valid basis for the Baluch's charges of neglect and discrimination which they make against the federal authorities, the Baluch, for their part, have not been able to break away from their tribal ways and have at times shown resistance to government efforts to integrate them in to the national mainstream. This has put the two on a collision course. Baluch disenchantment with the federal government has increased over the years because of the government's apathy to their demands for greater participation and speedy development of the province. On the other hand, strategies of the government may to some extent have failed to placate the Baluch because socio-economic development was not

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<sup>72</sup>Federal Government Civil Servant's Census Report, January 1983, (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 1984), cited in Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements in Pakistan, Domestic and International Factors* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1988), p. 174.



followed by a proper power-sharing arrangement. These socio-economic factors have in large measure contributed to the rise of ethnic consciousness among the Baluch.

### **The Sikhs in Punjab**

The Sikhs, constituting 1.7 percent of the population of India, form a small minority group in the country. (See Table 3.6). Most of the Indian Sikhs (80 percent) are concentrated in the small state of Punjab, situated on the North-western border of India. A prosperous community, they are well-represented in Indian business, the army and the bureaucracy, far greater than the ratio of their population. According to one estimate, by the beginning of 1980s, an overall 8 percent of central government employees were Sikhs.<sup>73</sup> Punjab's success in agricultural production by the coming of the green revolution was phenomenal, and its per capita income (U.S. \$650) one of the highest in the country.

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<sup>73</sup>Ishtiaq Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Pinter Publications, 1998), p. 125.

Table 3.6 Religious Groups in India, 1991.<sup>74</sup>

Religion	Number (million)	Percent
Hindus	699	83.8
Muslims	90	11.2
Christians	18	2.2
Sikhs	14	1.7
Buddhists	6	0.7
Jains	4	0.5

But this did not prevent the beginnings of insurgency in the state. Despite its prosperity, the Sikh quest for a separate identity has revolved around two important symbols: language and religion. These have been used to emphasise their distinctiveness in relation to Hindi-speaking groups and Hindu regions such as the neighbouring state of Haryana. They have also been used to press for more economic and political privileges from the central government.

The period prior to the partition of the subcontinent constitutes an important chapter in the history of the Sikhs. It provides the basis for understanding the rise and growth of Sikh identity, and its politicisation and subsequent disillusionment with the Indian state in the post-partition period. The history of the Sikhs before independence can be broadly divided into three periods. Between 1469 and 1708, the community was formed and led by a succession of ten living spiritual leaders who established its central doctrines and

<sup>74</sup>Ramesh Thakur, *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), Table 1.2, p. 6.

institutions. The second stage (1708-1849), was the heroic age of Sikh history during which the Sikhs struggled against governors sent from Delhi and the Afghan invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali. Eventually they emerged supreme and established a powerful kingdom of their own in Punjab. The third stage (1840 -1947) marks the period of British rule and the beginning of the Sikh demand for a separate homeland. The religious component, however, remains an important starting point for any discussion on the socio-economic basis of Sikh identity.

*First phase: The rise of Sikhism*

Various theories have been advanced to explain the rise of Sikhism. Some scholars see it as a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam while others see it as a reform movement within the fold of Hinduism. According to Cynthia Keppley,

The early panth (Sikh community) can most accurately be seen as a sect arising from within the Hindu fold: egalitarian in ideology, mystical in orientation and guided by a mediator - guru - between the divine and the human.<sup>75</sup>

Yet others see it as "not some supposed syncretism of Hinduism and Islam, but a new faith transcending both which was destined to define itself as distinct from the Hindu world from which it had emerged."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, "Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, no. 3, March 1989, p. 327. Also see Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 17; Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism* (Lahore: New Book Society, 1946), pp. 38, 346, 356.

<sup>76</sup>Christopher Shackle, *The Sikhs*, The Minority Rights Group Report no 65 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1984), p. 3.

The word "Sikh" is derived from the Sanskrit word *Shishya* meaning disciple or learner. Guru Nanak(1469-1539), the founder of the religion, was a social and religious reformer who rejected the idolatry of Hinduism, challenged the caste-based Brahmanical traditions, and preached the equality of all men.<sup>77</sup> Nanak was succeeded by a line of nine gurus who propagated his gospel<sup>78</sup> until the death of the last guru, Gobind Singh, in 1708.

The execution of the fifth guru, Guru Arjun (1581-1606), by the Mughal emperor, Jahangir, marked a turning point in the history of Sikhism. A peaceful community until then, the Sikhs were now engaged in a policy of armed confrontation with the Mughals and by the time of the next guru, Guru Hargobind (1606-1644), an element of militancy had crept into the order. Guru Hargobind symbolised this combative mood by the construction of the *Akal Takht*, seat of militant temporal authority. He donned two swords, one representing the spiritual authority of the guru (*piri*) and the other a newly assumed temporal authority (*miri*).<sup>79</sup> The militarisation of the Sikhs was formally established by the last living guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708) thus completing the transformation of the Sikhs from

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<sup>77</sup>It may be mentioned here that caste solidarity has never been particularly strong in Punjab. Most communities, such as the Jats, Khatri and Aroras, would eat with one another and even intermarry. Punjab is made up of the following social classes: the Jats are the landowning class who form the backbone of the agricultural community in Punjab; Aroras and Khatri are the middlemen, shopkeepers and businessmen; there is an artisan class; and Mazhabis, or scheduled castes, who comprise a large proportion of labourers in agriculture and industry.

<sup>78</sup>God, according to Nanak, was both truth and reality, the only one, omnipotent and omniscient. He was formless (Nirankar) and revealed himself through his creation. According to Nanak, liberation could be achieved only by inward meditation to this Akal Purakh or the timeless being. The six different aspects of a single all-embracing concept propounded by Nanak were: *sabad* (word); *nam* (name); *guru* (divine preceptor); *hukam* (divine order); *sach* (truth) and *nadar* (grace). For details see W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), p. 190.

<sup>79</sup>W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs: History, Religion, and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 4.

peaceful to militant. Guru Gobind Singh instituted the *Khalsa*, "company of the pure," by baptising five disciples (*Panj Pyare*) into this newly established order.<sup>80</sup> After his death, supreme spiritual authority was vested in the scriptures.

### *Second phase - 1708-1849*

The next phase witnessed a rapid decline in the central authority of the Mughal Empire. The rise of Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) channelled the energies of the Sikhs to establish a unified kingdom of Punjab. His empire extended from Afghan territories to the west and Kashmir to the north and reached as far as Tibet. A gifted ruler and administrator, Ranjit Singh fought with great courage and determination to maintain his independence from the British.<sup>81</sup> The glory of Ranjit Singh has since been revived and reappropriated as part of the distinct cultural heritage and identity of the Sikhs.

### *Third Phase - 1840-1947*

Sikhism, with its ritualistic simplicity and pragmatism, had attracted large numbers of low-caste Hindus. Its emphasis on equality, and the absence of caste distinction or priestly hierarchy, was seen by many as a way of breaking the shackles of a highly oppressive caste system and

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<sup>80</sup>All those who joined the Khalsa were to keep the title of Singh or Lion and observe five symbols which would help distinguish a Sikh from other religious communities. These constitute the five K's, namely; *Kaccha* (shorts), *Kanga* (comb), *Kesh* (long hair), *Kirpan* (sword) and *Kada* (silver bangle). Not all Sikhs accepted the baptism, but it was henceforth the bearded and turbanned members of the new order who were regarded as guardians of the community's orthodoxy.

<sup>81</sup>For more on Ranjit Singh see Bikramajit Hasrat, *Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, A Saga of Benevolent Despotism* (Punjab:1977); J. D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs: From the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej* (Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1955).

creating social mobility in their new-found environment. However, during the time of Ranjit Singh and after, there was a sharp fall in the number of those practising the outward observances of Sikhism. Ranjit Singh was tolerant of all religions and the easy-going influence of traditional Hindu customs was particularly widespread among the Sikhs during his time. It looked as if the Sikhs would soon disappear as a group distinct from Hindus. Till the beginning of the nineteenth century, most *khalsa* Sikhs observed both Hindu traditions and rituals, and Sikh practices.<sup>82</sup>

According to Harbans Singh, such was the state of the Sikh religion in 1849, that

it was losing its characteristic vigour and its votaries were relapsing into beliefs and dogmas from which their new faith had extricated them. Absorption into ceremonial Hinduism seemed the course inevitably set for them.<sup>83</sup>

The rise of Hindu organisations such as the Arya Samaj created more insecurities among the Sikhs. The founder of Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883), was against idol worship and the caste system, and the Sikh orthodoxy feared that his monotheism and egalitarianism would appeal to the *Sahajdharis*, those who believed in the teachings of the gurus without keeping the outward appearances, and win them away from the *panth*. At another level, threat to Sikhism came in the form of the proselytising activities of the Christian missionaries.<sup>84</sup> This gave rise to new anxieties in the

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<sup>82</sup>Rajeev A. Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>83</sup>Harbans Singh, *Heritage of Sikhs* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 129.

<sup>84</sup>The number of Christians in Punjab rose from 3,796 in 1881 to 19,547 in 1891 and to 315,831 in 1921. Among the converts were not just low caste Hindus but some well-to-do Sikhs from aristocratic families like Kanwar Harnam Singh, the heir to the Sikh princely state of Kapurthala.

minds of the Sikh leaders. Threatened by the Hindus, Muslims and Christians, the Sikhs tried to reform and organise their religious and social institutions so as to remain distinct from other groups.

Two reform movements, the *Nirankari* and the *Namdhari*, aimed at purging the Sikh religion from ritualistic practices.<sup>85</sup> They replaced the Brahmanical rituals practised by Sikhs with ceremonies based on the *Adi Granth* (the sacred scripture of the Sikhs compiled by Guru Arjan in 1603-4). They also laid the foundation for the establishment in 1873 of yet another society, the Singh Sabha, which sought to restore Sikhism to its pure form. The main objectives of the Sabha were to arouse the love of religion among the Sikhs and to propagate the words of the guru through books and periodicals published in Punjabi.<sup>86</sup>

The reformers also demanded control of the management of the Sikh shrines by the Sikh reformers. The Sikh shrines or *gurudwaras* were in the charge of *Mahants* or high priests of temples, who were indulging in "non Sikh" customs in performing rituals and installing images of Hindu gods and goddesses in *gurudwara* premises.<sup>87</sup> This had angered the radical elements in the Sikh order and some of these

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<sup>85</sup>Nirankaris believed in the *nirankaar* or formless nature of the divine being and preached the reform of various social ceremonies and practices performed at death, birth and marriage. The Namdhari movement, founded by Baba Balak Singh (1799-1862) and later his successor Ram Singh, also emphasised the purification of certain Sikh practices that had crept into the *panth*. The followers were to lead austere lives and repeat the name or *nam* of God in prayer (hence *namdhari*). For details see Surjit Kaur Jolly, *Sikh Revivalist Movements: The Nirankari and Namdhari Movements in Punjab in the 19th Century* (New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1988), pp. 74-80.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 82-90. Also see Sarfraz Hussain Khwaja, *Sikhs of the Punjab 1900-1915: A Study of Confrontation and Political Mobilisation* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1980), pp. 27-30.

<sup>86</sup>Gerald N. Barrier, *The Sikhs and their Literature; A Guide to Tracts, Books and Periodicals* (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1970), pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>87</sup>R.R. Sahni, *Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines* (Amritsar, Sikh Ithihas Research Board, n.d), pp. 5-9.

activists formed a self constituted Shrimomi Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) on 15 November 1920 for the management of the Sikh shrines.

The more militant organised a semi-military corps of volunteers known as the Akali Dal (army of immortals) which was to raise and train men for action in taking over the *gurudwaras* from recalcitrant *mahants*. The SGPC became a sort of parliament for the Sikhs; the Dal, its army; and the income from the *gurudwaras* was used for its sustenance. The passing of the Sikh Gurudwara Act of 1925 placed the responsibility for the management and control of all Sikh shrines in the hands of the Sikhs. The act continues to be operative and gives Sikhs a tremendous advantage with regard to control of their places of worship.

*Relations with the British and demand for a separate homeland.*

The Sikhs had proved their loyalty to the British in the early years of British rule in Punjab, but it was clearly on the wane after 1919. The Rowlatt Act, which gave the British sweeping powers to incarcerate people without trial to maintain internal order, and the Jallianwala bagh massacre on 12 April 1919 turned the Sikhs against the British. Their anger deepened when instead of the much-promised 33 percent representation that they expected as reward for their services in the army, they were given, under the Government of India Act 1919, only 15 out of a total of 93 seats in the Punjab legislative council.<sup>88</sup> The Ramsay MacDonald award of April 1932 which established separate electorates for all minorities, also deprived the Sikhs of their rightful

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<sup>88</sup>For details see Sarfaraz Khwaja, *op. cit.*, p. 204.



representation based on their percentage,<sup>89</sup> in the United Provinces and Sindh where they were found in sizeable numbers.

The resolution passed by the Muslim League for a separate Muslim state comprising the predominantly Muslim areas of India, including Punjab, was a final blow for the Sikhs. A division of Punjab along Hindu-Muslim lines meant that the Sikh community could be split into two and their numbers reduced further. Sikh leaders insisted upon the creation of a Sikh state if Pakistan was conceded. The idea of *Azad* or independent Punjab was conceived to secure greater political leverage for the Sikh community; separate the Muslim-majority districts from the Punjab; and form a new province in which the maximum number of Sikhs could coexist and no single religious community would command a majority.<sup>90</sup>

*Azad* Punjab, however, could not be realised because of a number of reasons. First, the events were poised in favour of the Muslim League. In the general elections of 1945-46, the Muslim League held complete sway over the Muslim masses.<sup>91</sup> The League contested the polls on the issue of Pakistan and won all the seats in the Central Legislature, and apart from the North Western Frontier Province, it gained the support of 90 percent of the Muslim populace in all other provinces.

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<sup>89</sup>They managed just 33 out of 175 seats in the Punjab assembly while the Muslims, who secured 86 seats in the state legislature were assured of a majority in the state. For details see Khushwant Singh, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 232.

<sup>90</sup>Punjab prior to partition in 1947 was predominantly Muslim in the western districts and Hindu in the eastern district, and even though the Sikhs were concentrated in the central districts, they were not in a majority.

<sup>91</sup> See Khushwant Singh, op. cit., p. 256.

Second, as perceived by the British,

The way the Sikh spokesmen worded their demand for a Sikh state not as something inherently desirable but simply a point in an argument against Pakistan robbed the suggestion of any chance of serious consideration.<sup>92</sup>

Third, the small numbers of the Sikhs (they made up 5,500,000 as compared to 90,000,000 Muslims at that time) and the fact that they were not concentrated in any area which could be carved out into a separate state<sup>93</sup> made the demand untenable. The reality of the situation made the Sikhs give up their opposition to the scheme, albeit reluctantly. For want of a better solution, the Sikhs agreed to the partition of Punjab. But while the Muslims got Pakistan, the Sikhs were left with no choice but to remain with the Indian state.<sup>94</sup>

### *Political Developments in the post-partition period*

#### *Punjabi suba*

The memories of partition have remained entrenched in the Sikh psyche. The division of the country brought profound changes in the socio-economic lives of the Sikhs. In independent India the Sikhs found themselves in a difficult economic situation. The Sikh farmers from West Pakistan lost much land in the resettlement schemes while their Eastern counterparts were affected adversely by the introduction of a ceiling limit of 30 acres. There were delays in granting loans for rehabilitating the Sikh refugees, and the Sikh

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<sup>92</sup> Khushwant Singh, op. cit., p. 259.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., See footnote 10, p. 262.

<sup>94</sup> For details on developments from 1940-47 see Christine Effenberg, *Political Status of Sikhs during the Indian National Movement, 1935-1947* (New Delhi: Archives, 1989), pp. 117-65.

monopoly over the transport sector came under threat because of the government's policy to nationalise it. At another level, the abolition of separate electorates, and the revival of Sanskrit and Hindi, made the Sikhs uneasy about their identity.

This did not in any way diminish the desire of the Sikhs to press for their own homeland. The pattern of migration created Sikh concentrations in certain districts of East Punjab. In 1948, the Sikh states of the Punjab, Malerkotla and Nalagarh were merged to form the Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), with Sikhs as a majority. This gave them their first chance of establishing their own homeland. However, the concentration of the Sikh population and Akali proclivities induced the government to abolish the PEPSU in 1956 and merge it into East Punjab.

According to Khushwant Singh,

Economic and political sanctions could no longer be invoked; the only hope lay in having a province or a state where they could insist on the teaching of the Punjabi language, Sikh scriptures and history and thus mould the minds of the younger generation to cherish the Khalsa tradition.<sup>95</sup>

The demand for a Punjabi suba originated in the context of the aforementioned factors. It was not conceded in the first instance because the government felt that it was prompted by communal rather than linguistic considerations. However, the creation of the state of Andhra Pradesh for the Telegu speaking people in 1953, and of Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960, prompted similar demands in Punjab. Leaders like Sant Fateh Singh asked for a separate state based on linguistic grounds.

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<sup>95</sup>Khushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

The government of India conceded the demand in 1966 and split Punjab to form modern Punjab and Haryana.<sup>96</sup> In the new Punjab, the Sikhs formed nearly 60 percent of the population, and Punjabi was declared the official language. But the situation remained complicated because a large number of Hindus continued to reside in Punjab and showed little enthusiasm for Punjabi. The retention of Chandigarh as a union territory, and a joint capital of both Punjab and Haryana, opened the possibility of future conflict. The creation of the Punjabi suba did not completely satisfy the demands of the Sikhs.

#### *Rise of religious fundamentalism in Punjab*

The political demands got enmeshed with religion by the end of the 1970s laying the basis of militancy in Punjab. The rise of Sikh fundamentalism can be traced back to 1978 when Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (1947-1984) assumed the role of a religious preacher and leader in the Sikh community. Bhindrawale directed his anger at the central government and started advocating ways of propogating his brand of Sikhism. He wanted to purge it of some of the malpractices that had crept into the order over the years and organised killer squads in each village to eliminate the enemies of the Sikh faith. His messages were carried out through Gurudwaras, Sikh educational institutions and various religious congregations.

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<sup>96</sup> Different theories have been advanced to explain how the Punjabi Suba was ultimately conceded. Some say that the Sikhs' threat of non-cooperation during the war with Pakistan in 1965 compelled the then prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, to ultimately give in to their demand. Others believe that it was the change in tactics and in leadership that made the Punjabi Suba a reality. Sant Fateh Singh, who took the reins from Master Tara Singh, introduced a note of secularism in Akali politics and demanded a Punjabi suba defined as one which comprises an area where "Punjabi language is spoken regardless of the fact whether the Sikhs are in a majority or minority." See Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle, A Retrospect* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1988), p. 165.

The Akalis whose main ideology stemmed from being true representatives of the Sikh community, came under immense pressure from Bhindrawale. As the central government failed to reach a political settlement with the Akali party on issues such as the capital territory of Punjab and the distribution of river waters, the stature of Bhindrawale went from strength to strength; violence increased in the state with attacks on policemen and political figures becoming the order of the day. When violence took on a communal colour, president's rule was imposed in the state with a massive deployment of the Indian army. Bhindranwale and his followers took refuge in the Golden Temple and the army was called upon to remove the militants from the holy shrine in an operation called the Operation Blue Star on 1 June 1984 killing 5,000 civilians and upto 700 military officers.

The destruction of the Akal Takht sent shock waves through the Sikh community in India and outside. It was the ultimate sacrilege that any government could have committed against a minority community. On 31 October, 1984 the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, was killed by her own Sikh bodyguards and a few days later riots broke out in parts of northern India targetting the Sikh population at large. Political mismanagement by parties at the centre and in Punjab, inept handling of the law and order situation, and active support from foreign sources resulted in a reign of terror in Punjab which reached its peak between 1985 and 1990. According to the White Paper, between 1982 up to June 3, 1984, there were over 1200 violent incidents in which 410 persons were killed and more than 1180

injured.<sup>97</sup> According to another source, between 1981 and 1989, 5,521 people were killed by terrorists, but what is alarming is that in just two years (1990 and 1991), the death toll went up to more than 6,000 people.<sup>98</sup>

But suffice to add that these events instilled a sense of discrimination amongst the Sikhs *vis-a-vis* the Indian state. The fact that the Punjabi suba was the last linguistic state to be conceded in India, and that demands of the Sikhs were considered communal, and hence a threat to the secular foundations of the Indian state did little to allay their fears. The unresolved issues of Chandigarh and the river waters, and the Sikh perception that the government of India was following a deliberate policy to dilute the presence of the Sikhs in the army from 20 to 2.5 percent, in keeping with the proportion of the Sikh population in the country was viewed with further disillusionment. The attack on the Golden Temple was the proverbial last straw on the camel's back which proved to be a turning point in the demand for a separate Sikh state. The rise of separatism and militancy, and the strategies of the state in dealing with it will be explained in the subsequent chapter.

#### *Punjab: economic dimensions*

Though more political in content, the Khalistan movement was an indirect outcome of economic factors. The political factors, as discussed above, laid the basis for the crystallisation of Sikh identity

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<sup>97</sup>*White Paper on the Punjab Agitation*, op. cit., p. 32. For a description of the main incidents of violence in Punjab during 1981-1984, see Annexure 7 of the White Paper, pp. 110-62.

<sup>98</sup>Ministry of Home Affairs, *Agenda: National Integration Council Meeting* 31 December 1991 (New Delhi, Government of India Press, 1991) Annexure 1.

but the economic factors were instrumental in contributing to separatist sentiments among the Sikhs. As mentioned earlier, 80 percent of the Sikhs reside in Punjab, which is the fourth smallest state in India and accounts for nearly 2.5 percent of its population.<sup>99</sup>

It is also India's most prosperous state. In 1985-86, per capita income in the state was Rs 1,600 compared to an all-India average of Rs 779 at 1970-71 prices.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, although 72 percent of its people live in rural areas, Punjab's percentage of rural people living below the poverty line is the lowest among all Indian states and it has the highest average life expectancy. A classic example of rapidly growing agriculture, Punjab is the bread basket of India, producing one-fourth of the total wheat in the country, and is a major producer of other cereals such as maize, rice and bajra; pulses; and important cash crops such as cotton, sugarcane and groundnuts.

### *The green revolution*

A framework for Punjab's economic growth was created as far back as the 19th century when British government officials reformed land institutions and the revenue system in Punjab and sought to increase production by introducing an extensive irrigation system and colonising crown wastelands. However, with the partition of India in 1947, Punjab was divided into two segments - the eastern part

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<sup>99</sup>According to the 1981 census, Punjab had a population of 16.7 million out of India's 684 million people. Cited in Robin Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India, Punjab, Ethnic Conflict and the Test for Federalism* (New York: Holmes and Meir Publishers, 1994), p. 27.

<sup>100</sup>Cited in Sucha Singh Gill, "Development Crisis in Agriculture and Its Political Implications—An Enquiry into the Punjab Problem" in Paul Wallace and Surendra Chopra (eds), *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1988).

remained in India while the western part went to Pakistan. A series of acts introduced in the early 1950s<sup>101</sup> helped in the abolition of intermediaries, and conferred full proprietary rights on occupancy tenants. As a result, the area cultivated by owners increased from 51.4 percent of the total in 1947 to 66.4 percent in 1957 and 80.89 percent in 1969-70.<sup>102</sup> This restructuring of the rural base paved the way for the green revolution, creating an agricultural society that had the capacity to adopt improved agricultural techniques and production technology.<sup>103</sup>

From 1952 to 1965, a period that might appropriately be called the transition or take-off stage, Punjab's agricultural output grew at an annual rate of more than 5.5 percent.<sup>104</sup> It recorded the highest growth rate of total crop output among the Indian states over the period 1952-53 to 1964-65. The average annual growth of crop output in Punjab during this period was 1.6 times the all-India growth rate and 4.5 times the growth rate in Assam, India's lowest ranking state. Its rate of growth even compared favourably with the fast developing economies of Mexico, Taiwan and Brazil. Of greater significance was the fact that despite its small size and the fact that it accounted for only 3 percent of the net sown area and 3.5 percent of the total cropped area in India, Punjab was producing nearly 28 percent of the total wheat, 6

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<sup>101</sup>These were the *East Punjab Utilisation of Land Act, 1949*; *The Punjab Occupancy Tenants Act, 1952*; *The Punjab Abolition of Ala-malkiyat and Talukdari Rights Act*; *The Punjab Security of Land Tenures Act, 1953*; *Patiala and East Punjab States Union Abolition of Biswedari Ordinance*, and *The PEPSU Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1955*.

<sup>102</sup>Randhawa, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>103</sup>For details on land reforms, see Pritam Singh, *Punjab Economy - The Emerging Pattern* (New Delhi: Enkay Publishers, 1995), pp. 124-59.

<sup>104</sup>Richard H. Day and Inderjit Singh, *Economic Development as an Adaptive process, The Green Revolution in Indian Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 9.



percent of the total cereals, and over 5 percent of the total output of food grains in 1965.<sup>105</sup>

Rapid advances in the agricultural sector were made possible due to a variety of factors. Some of these included increase in the area under cultivation; improved seeds and use of fertilisers; growth and improvement of the physical infrastructure; institutions of credit, banking and marketing; and price policy and prices.

The proportion of net sown area to total area available for cultivation went up from 75 percent in 1960-61 to 84 percent in 1988-89. Fallow land was 313,000 hectares in 1960-61 but came down to 51,000 hectares in 1988-89.<sup>106</sup> Increase in the area under cultivation corresponded with bringing more land under irrigation through wells, which accounted for 80 percent of the rise in net irrigated area between 1960 and 1979,<sup>107</sup> and later by tube wells.<sup>108</sup> Reclamation of alkaline and saline areas also increased agricultural output. For example, the output of rice increased about 23 times, that of wheat 6.10 times, and food grains almost 5.5 times from 1965-66 to 1989-90.<sup>109</sup>

The green revolution was based on procuring high yielding varieties (HYV) of seed developed in Mexico and the Philippines in the 1960s and then applying them in Punjab. Sweeping technological changes

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<sup>105</sup>Richard H. Day and Inderjit Singh, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>107</sup>Anya McGuirk and Yair Mundlak, "Incentives and Constraints in the Transformation of Punjab Agriculture," *Research Report 87*, International Food Policy Research Institute, 1991. p. 31.

<sup>108</sup>By 1981-82, the number of tubewells had increased to 610,000 accounting for well over 90 percent of the total area irrigated by wells. For details see J.R Westley, *Agriculture and Equitable Growth: The Case of Punjab-Haryana*, Special Studies in Agricultural Science and Policy (Colorado, 1986). Also see Randhawa, op. cit., pp. 105-10.

<sup>109</sup>Pritam Singh, op. cit., p. 77.

helped in the creation of new HYV of wheat which greatly increased the wheat and rice production of Punjab. Bodies like the Punjab State Seed Corporation and the Seed Certification Authority were set up for the production and supply of improved seeds.

The one advantage that Punjab had over other states was that the infrastructure required for the green revolution was already there in the late 1960s. During the first phase from 1950-51 to 1965-66, basic institutional and economic infrastructure was created through large amounts of public investment in consolidation of land holdings, irrigation, and power development. This phase laid the foundation for the modernisation of agriculture in Punjab. During the second phase, (1968-69), a vast programme of village roads was launched, enabling the farmers to carry their produce to the markets and fetch a competitive price for it. From 1965-66 to 1979-80, power generation in Punjab increased by 328 percent and by about the same amount in India. During the same period, per capita consumption increased by 241 percent in Punjab compared to about 138 percent in India.<sup>110</sup>

Since the technology introduced by the green revolution was capital-intensive, it was important that capital was readily available to the farmer. This was achieved with the help of credit societies, land mortgage banks, other co-operative institutions, and nationalised banks which provided short-term credit facilities for the purchase of fertilisers. Not only did the credit facilities help provide fertilisers and other infrastructural prerequisites for the green revolution, they were a boon for small and marginal farmers who could now turn to

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<sup>110</sup>G.K Chadha, *The State and Rural Economic Transformation: A Study of Punjab, 1950-85* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1986), p. 75.

institutional sources of finance without falling into the clutches of the money lender.

Finally the establishment of the Agricultural Prices Commission in 1960 helped set procurement prices at a level remunerative to farmers to promote greater reliance on domestic rather than imported supplies of food grain for the public distribution system.<sup>111</sup> This called for a greater reliance on Punjab, and its contribution of food grains. During 1980-81, government procurement accounted for 64 percent of Punjab's wheat production and 45 percent of its rice production.<sup>112</sup> The policy was significant in that it provided a guaranteed market for Punjabi food grain and an incentive for increased production.

#### *Socio-economic effects of the green revolution*

The technological breakthrough achieved by the green revolution and the rapid advancements in agriculture left an indelible imprint on the socio-economic fabric of Punjabi society. Agricultural growth induced growth in the economy at large, with industry growing at an average annual rate of 6.25 percent over 1960-79, and, more strikingly, at a 16 percent rate during the last five years of the 1970s. Similarly, the average annual growth of the tertiary sector (services) during these two decades was 4.7 percent but between 1975 and 1979 the sector grew at a spectacular 36 percent a year.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>The key instrument in the agricultural pricing in India is the price at which the government procures food grains for the public distribution system. This includes restrictions on grain movement between various regions, government procurement in surplus districts, distribution and rationing in urban areas and administrative control over traders.

<sup>112</sup>Cited in Anya Mc Guirk and Yair Mundlak, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

There have, however, been many debates on whether the fruits of the green revolution were distributed equally among all sections of the society. Although the main reason for Punjab's prosperity lay in the opportunities that arose from the green revolution, by about 1974, the green revolution had begun to peter out. Production of wheat fell from 5.6 million metric tonnes in 1972 to 5.4 million in 1973, 5.2 million in 1974, and 5.3 million in 1975.<sup>114</sup> By 1977-78 returns on wheat cultivation had fallen to less than 2 percent of investment.

According to one view, as the ecological, political and cultural costs of the revolution became more manifest, it was clear that the revolution has generated more conflict than reduced it. It also had visible impact on the materials/ecological systems which in turn tended to create new potential sources of conflict.<sup>115</sup>

On the economic front, the gains were shortlived because of their unequal distribution among the various sections of society and the different regions in Punjab.<sup>116</sup> Class inequalities have always existed in Punjab. By the 1970s, for example, an estimated 23 percent of landholding families (each holding at least 4 hectares) owned two-thirds of the cultivated land.<sup>117</sup> But these disparities were further accentuated by the coming of the green revolution. The position of the agricultural labourers had become even more vulnerable. With the plateauing of the green revolution there was a growing pauperisation of marginal and poor peasants, who could neither reap

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<sup>114</sup> Manohar Singh Gill, "The Development of Punjab Agriculture 1977-80", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, no. 7, July 1983, p. 832.

<sup>115</sup> For useful discussion on this subject, see Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution, Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics* (London: Zed Books, 1991).

<sup>116</sup> Inter-district variations in crop yields were dependent on many factors such as irrigation, fertiliser use, availability of power, etc. For details see Pritam Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-89.

<sup>117</sup> Dalip Singh, *Dynamics of Punjab Politics* (New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 1981), p. 59.

the benefits of the land nor find employment in the industrial sector.<sup>118</sup> With capital intensive agriculture, landless workers rose from 17.3 percent in 1961 to 32.1 percent in 1971; it was about 40 percent in 1984.<sup>119</sup> The green revolution strategy was successful initially because the government had provided subsidies and support prices to help the farmers. However, this could not continue indefinitely and with the rising cost of fertilisers and pesticides, the small farmers were the worst hit, accumulating huge losses and debts. Even the big landlords, who could avail themselves of credit facilities at cheap rates, started to feel the pinch with the increase in the prices of inputs, and shortages of electricity and water.

Lack of co-ordination at the administrative level also disrupted agricultural development of the state. According to Vandana Shiva, the inevitability of the green revolution was built on neglecting other, more ecologically sound avenues for increasing land production, such as improving mixed cropping patterns, using indigenous seeds, and efficient use of land resources. The intensive irrigation needed by the HYV led to problems of water-logging and salinity which in turn led to crop failures.<sup>120</sup> Thus while increase in productivity was the main objective of the green revolution, the productivity could not be sustained for long because the new varieties had generated a new ecological vulnerability by reducing genetic diversity and affecting the soil and water systems.

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<sup>118</sup>Gopal Singh, "Socio Economic Bases of the Punjab Crisis," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 19, no. 1, 7 January 1984, pp. 42-43.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>120</sup>Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution, Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics* (op. cit.), pp. 83-89.

At the social level, the rise of prosperity in Punjab was accompanied by growing unemployment. With so much emphasis on agriculture, the industrial infrastructure of the state remained relatively underdeveloped save for some small-scale industries such as woollen textiles and hosiery financed largely by the remittances of overseas Sikhs. In the sixth Five Year Plan (1980-5), the central authorities allotted Rs. 240 billion for investment to heavy industry but only Rs. 100 million (0.04 percent) was to be spent in Punjab.<sup>121</sup> Many Punjabi youths were forced to go elsewhere to seek employment and, in turn, Punjab attracted semi-skilled and unskilled labour from states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.<sup>122</sup>

At the political level, the green revolution tended to lead to the politicisation of the farmers against the Indian state. The status conferred by the green revolution on Punjab, as the breadbasket of India became a cause for discontent, when the benefits started fading. The backlash from the Sikh peasantry at the perceived failure of their hopes while other parts of the country appeared to benefit from their efforts was quite violent. Jat farmers resented the centre's procurement of their wheat crop at below market prices. The redistribution of wheat from surplus areas to deficit areas of the country at subsidised prices did not meet their approval.

As mentioned earlier, Punjab has one of the highest per capita incomes in the country. By the early 1970s, it was meeting over 90 percent of its total expenditure and its share of central assistance had

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<sup>121</sup>See Pramod Kumar et al., *Punjab Crisis: Context and Trends* (Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, 1984), pp. 55-61.

<sup>122</sup>For more on migrant labour see R. Ballard, "The Context and Consequences of Migration: Jullunder and Mirpur Compared," *New Community*, Autumn-Winter, 1983, pp. 117-36.

dropped considerably. Between the first and sixth five year plans, that is from the early 1950s to the mid 1970s, central assistance had dropped from 86.5 percent to 15.3 percent.<sup>123</sup> Declining dependence on the central resource transfers coupled with the high rates of growth in state domestic product raised the expectations of the people of Punjab who felt that they were not getting enough in return for their contribution for feeding the rest of the country.

Mismanagement of the unprecedented prosperity during the years of the green revolution, both by authorities and by those who benefited from it, fragmentation of land, absence of industrial development, and large number of educated unemployed aggravated the situation further. This economic and political crisis began to take communal overtones when the Akali Dal, the main party of the Jat Sikhs or the farmers, started couching its economic and social demands in the name of religion.

According to Joyce Pettigrew, the rise and fall of the guerrilla movement in Punjab is a result of the changes that took place in the dominant Jat community in Punjab: not only was their economic viability threatened by the coming of the Green Revolution but the traditions of the Sikhs were also being undermined.<sup>124</sup> The Green revolution, which promised to bring prosperity to the the farmers led instead to an unequal distribution of wealth. The erosion of Sikh values and the attack on the Golden Temple added to the woes of the small and medium-scale farmers, who turned against the state with a

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<sup>123</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, op.cit., p. 171.

<sup>124</sup> Joyce. M Pettigrew, *The Sikhs of the Punjab - Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence* (London: Zed books, 1995), p. 55.

vengeance. Most of them were willing recruits for militant organisations.

Conspicuous consumption created by the short-term prosperity of the revolution, led to other social problems. Drug addiction, alcoholism and violence became common and religion became a means of rectifying the deteriorating moral climate.

It is important to note, however, that as pointed out by Dipankar Gupta, the economic factors worked, only as a boundary condition.<sup>125</sup> Even though economic grievances were emphasised time and again to point to discrimination at the hands of the centre, they only gained credence once the secessionist demand became more viable. This explains why the tapering off of the green revolution in the mid 1970s was not followed by militancy or demands for separatism, which became a feature of Punjab's politics only at the beginning of the 1980s.

### *Conclusion*

While juxtaposing two movements of groups as different as the Sikhs and the Baluch, it is clear that two very different sets of circumstances can produce similar feelings of frustration and disenchantment *vis-a-vis* the state. The Baluch is a classic case of how under development and relative deprivation created grounds for insurgency and separatism in Pakistan. Being the smallest minority in Pakistan, the Baluch have shown a remarkable resilience in preserving their

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<sup>125</sup>Dipankar Gupta, *The Context of Ethnicity: Sikh Identity in a Comparative Perspective* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 70.



identity against attempts by federal regimes to incorporate them into the national mainstream or interfere in their socio-cultural lives. Their desire for self-determination, spurred by feelings of relative deprivation and fear of being made an internal colony of Pakistan, has been a constant source of friction between them and the federal government.

In contrast, the Sikhs in Punjab are one of the most prosperous communities in India, but even their relative wealth and prosperity could not contain their sense of growing alienation from the rest of the country. The green revolution brought its own unintended effects of widening class disparities, unequal distribution of wealth, rising unemployment, and breaking of traditional ties, which had a profound impact on Punjab. Political stalemate on the resolution of the status of Chandigarh, and the distribution of river waters instilled a sense of discrimination amongst the Sikhs. The Sikhs believed that they joined India in the hope that their separate political status would be recognised by the Indian government but instead had to fight to preserve their identity. They found some succour in their religion, which was used by both the state and central elites to advance their own agendas, inspiring demands for a separate state of Khalistan among some sections of the people.

Subsequently, the Baluch and Sikh movements, both products of differing socio-economic milieux, gradually escalated into secessionist movements creating their own dynamics which threatened the integrity of India and Pakistan. The process of nation building and ethnic conflicts has to be studied at two levels: as a manifestation of social and economic crisis within the respective countries; and in

terms of the role of the state in dealing with such a crisis. The response of the respective states to the socio-economic grievances of the Baluch and the Sikhs, and the political repercussions of these responses will be dealt with in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4

### **STRATEGIES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS IN PAKISTAN AND INDIA IN DEALING WITH THE BALUCH AND THE PUNJAB CRISES**

This chapter examines the state in South Asia, with special reference to India and Pakistan. More specifically, the focus is on government strategies to contain ethnic conflict and how policies of nation-building affect minority communities. Both India and Pakistan have instituted policies to address the grievances of minority ethnic groups, but when faced with the threat of secession by the groups in question, they have not hesitated to use a mix of coercive and conciliatory tactics to contain them. The study focuses, in particular, on the response of the state to the Baluch tribes in Pakistan and the Sikhs in India.

It is a fact that as long as the state extends its coercive arm and employs pressure tactics to keep rising tensions in check, and defends such actions as part of national integration, ethnic groups find it difficult to realise the ultimate goal of secession. Both India and Pakistan face a similar dilemma with regard to their ethnic communities. Both have used a variety of strategies to manage ethnic tensions, ranging from conciliation to the use of brute force. Despite subtle shifts, the governments of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-77) and his successor Zia ul Haq (1977-88) both evinced a hard-line attitude towards the Baluch tribes. In the Indian case, the period under study (1978-92) witnessed the use of clever techniques combined with the deployment of the army, paramilitary troops and police to assist the Indian government to wipe out

militancy in the Punjab. The argument proposed here is that the use of a clever mix of conciliation and organised force, where necessary, by the respective states was one of the major factor responsible for the decline of the Khalistan and Baluch movements.

### **The Indian state: centre-state relations**

As noted in Chapter 2, the framework for the new independent Indian state was laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India (1947-64). A consensus was achieved on ethnic issues by drawing the boundaries of the states on a linguistic basis. The constitution of India recognises the various linguistic groups and their right to preserve their language, script and culture, and administer educational institutions of their choice.<sup>1</sup> In matters of religion, despite its overwhelming Hindu majority (82 percent of the total population), India is a secular state with equal rights for all religious communities. But the traumatic experience of partition in 1947 and the fear of further divisions made the constitution makers proponents of a strong centre.

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<sup>1</sup>The State Reorganisation Commission was appointed in 1953 and in 1956. Fourteen states and six Union Territories were formed in accordance with the languages spoken in the regions. By 1988 the number had grown to 25, with six union territories.

According to Bhawani Singh,

what the Indian constitution makers did was to ensure a convenient division of administrative labour between the centre and the units and not an equitable sharing of responsibility between them. In the final upshot, the system as it emerged, made the units of federation totally dependent upon and subservient to an omnipotent centre.<sup>2</sup>

Several provisions in the constitution favour the centre over the state. Some of these include the authority of the centre to legislate over subjects in the Union, State and Concurrent lists<sup>3</sup>, alter boundaries of existing states and create new ones, appoint governors in the states and proclaim a state of emergency under articles 352, 356 and 360 which includes the right to suspend or dismiss elected state legislatures.<sup>4</sup> There have been 91 such dismissals under Article 356 since the time of the promulgation of the constitution on 26 January 1950.<sup>5</sup> The centre also exercises control over all economic resources of the country including investments, the granting of licenses and location of all major public industries. The states are dependent on the centre for grants-in-aid, loans, development outlays and their shares from the other forms of revenue.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See Bhawani Singh, "Federalism and State Autonomy in India: The Paradigm and the Paradox," in Verinder Grover (ed.), *Political System and Constitution of India, Federal System, Centre-State Relations and State Autonomy*, Vol. 4 (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1997) p. 310.

<sup>3</sup>Under the constitution, government power is set out in three separate lists: Union, State and Concurrent. The centre is sovereign in the Union list of subjects; in the case of the concurrent list, which it shares with the state, it can override the state laws; and as for the state list, which is largely the domain of the states, the centre can take over state subjects even in normal times and for any period if the Lok Sabha approves of it by a two-thirds majority.

<sup>4</sup>The constitution of India has provided for three different kinds of emergencies. An emergency can be declared due to war, external aggression and armed rebellion; failure of constitutional machinery in the states; and financial distress.

<sup>5</sup>For details see K. Ranga Rao and Ravi Teja, "Article 356 and Presidents rule in the States," in Verinder Grover (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 318-31.

<sup>6</sup>New Delhi's revenue comes from the Corporate tax; its surcharge on income tax (shared between the state and the centre) and special excise duties, made some states argue that while their joint annual expenditure equals that of the centre, New Delhi keeps about 75 percent of the total national revenue. For details see Salamat Ali,

Predictably, the centre has been confronted with the problem of states wanting dilution in its powers and more autonomy for themselves. Industrialisation under the Nehruvian model helped strengthen the national economy but at the cost of intensifying regional inequalities. However, the ethnic movements in the 1950s and 1960s were concerned with the realignment of state boundaries along linguistic lines. They were not directed against the centre because the centre itself was not seen as being dominated by one particular group enjoying state power. Subsequently ethnic politics in India came to revolve around the demands of the underprivileged, backward or religious minority groups who were fighting for positive action in their favour: more quotas in employment and better access to education opportunities.

The Indian government have taken steps to address many of these demands. On the language question, the government has refrained from adopting Hindi as the national language and has settled for multilingual pluralism. The Official Languages (Amendment Bill) passed in December 1967 specified that English would remain an official means of communication for the country, in parliament, and between the central government and those states which had a non-Hindi state language. Thus a two language policy was formulated for official business, and a three language formula was adopted for secondary education as well as the government public service examinations.<sup>7</sup>

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"States Seek Larger Share of Tax Income, Row over Revenue," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 144, no. 14, 6 April 1989, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>The three language formula in secondary education meant that students would be taught at least three languages, the regional language and their mother if it was not the regional language; Hindi or, in Hindi-speaking areas, another Indian language; and English or any other modern European language. See Jyotindra Das Gupta,

Similarly the quota system has been devised to give better access to minority groups and the economically and socially backward communities.<sup>8</sup> Scheduled castes and tribes (who make up one-fifth of India's population) are allocated up to 22 percent of all places in educational institutions and universities; 22 percent of the posts in public employment; and 119 of the 543 seats in Parliament. The other backward castes are assured of another 27 percent reservation.<sup>9</sup>

However, some of these concessions have failed to provide solutions in recent years.<sup>10</sup> Reservations extended to communities other than scheduled castes and tribes, under the Mandal commission, unleashed a violent protest from among the upper classes in India in 1989. At another level, the central government has also found it difficult to reach a settlement when claims of one community have affected another. For example, the Assamese demand that illegal Bengali-speaking Muslim migrants from Bangladesh be expelled from the state could not be accepted because of opposition from the government of West Bengal. This has made the issue of centre-state relations particularly sensitive and has kept tensions alive between the centre and the states.

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*Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 259.

<sup>8</sup>For a discussion on affirmative policies in India see Partha Ghosh, "Positive Discrimination in India - A Political Analysis," *Ethnic Studies Report*, Vol. 15, no. 2, July 1997, pp. 135-69.

<sup>9</sup>Kanti Bajpai, "Diversity, Democracy, and Devolution in India," in Michael Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997), p. 53.

<sup>10</sup>Though the government remains committed to the quota system, those who have benefitted from reservations have tended to be a small elite within the scheduled caste and tribe communities, and the social stigma attached to the lower castes continues.

### The state of Pakistan: centre-state relations

Pakistan has followed a distinctly different course. In terms of political parties and organisations, the Muslim League could hardly be compared with the Congress Party in India.<sup>11</sup> It had no grassroots backing and depended largely on the landlords for votes. The failure of political parties to strike firm roots in Pakistan led to the forging of close links between the army, the landlord class and the bureaucracy. Pakistan has been under army rule for 25 of the 50 years of its existence and the army continues to exercise considerable power in the decision making of the country, albeit from behind the scenes.<sup>12</sup> The first coup staged by the army under the leadership of General Ayub Khan (1958-69) in October 1958, was followed by the military rule of Yahya Khan (1969-71) and that of General Zia ul Haq (1977-88).

During these periods political activities were greatly restricted. In the event, as noted by Ayesha Jalal,

Although Pakistan followed the Indian pattern of borrowing heavily from the 1935 act, including the distribution of powers between the centre and the provinces, the unitary aspects in its federal configuration were much starker in practice.<sup>13</sup>

The brief interlude between Yahya Khan and General Zia signalled a brief return of democracy. Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 war with India and the subsequent loss of its East wing, as the independent state of Bangladesh, dealt a big a blow to the prestige of the army. Its declining popularity was instrumental in reviving party politics. In 1971,

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<sup>11</sup> For details on party politics prior to 1958 see M. Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan, 1947-58* (Islamabad: National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> This is notwithstanding the fact that Pakistan has been a functioning democracy since December 1988 when Benazir Bhutto was elected prime minister.

<sup>13</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia - A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 184.



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the first head of a democratically elected government. However, Bhutto's high-handed policies led to his downfall. His actions, including the five-year-long guerrilla war in Baluchistan and the alleged rigging of the 1977 general elections, contributed to his demise and brought in the rule of Zia ul Haq. Zia's death in 1988 marked the end of military rule in Pakistan. The country has since then functioned as a democracy under the leaderships of Benazir Bhutto (December 1988-August 1990 and November 1993 -1996); and Nawaz Sharif (1990-1993 and from 1996 to the present day).

The issues that engaged Pakistan in the post independence years centred on two things: the role of Islam and centre-state relations. Though Islam provided the basis for the formation of the new state, the leaders, including Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation, could not decide on whether to make it secular or theocratic.<sup>14</sup> This ambiguity lent itself to a dangerous mix of religion and politics in subsequent years. The definition of a Pakistani identity - other than its Islamic basis - remained unclear, and both Muslim and Pakistani identities were used interchangeably in the discourse on national identity. Islam has been used as a tool by political parties to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people.<sup>15</sup> It has not, however, helped

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<sup>14</sup>Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor-General of Pakistan, 1947-1948* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, n.d.), pp. 8-9. For a contradictory position, on a Pakistani identity see Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad (ed.), *Speeches and Writings of Mr Jinnah*, vol. 2 (Lahore: Ashraf, 1960).

<sup>15</sup>For example, Bhutto declared the Ahmediyyas heretics to win the support of the *ulema* and other religious forces. Under Zia ul Haq (1977-88) several pieces of legislation were enacted to make Pakistan an Islamic country. Some of these included the *zakat* (tax levied on the Muslims to help the poor); *ushr* (tax on agricultural produce); punishments to deal with offences like drinking, theft and adultery; Islamisation of the judicial system by the establishment of quasi-courts and an advisory council called the Majlis-e-Shura, which could be consulted on state matters.

Pakistan to evolve a coherent national identity, but has rather sharpened ethnic polarization in the country.

With regard to the distribution of powers between the centre and the provinces, the centre kept most of the powers for itself. The three constitutions reflected a recognition of the federal principle but changes were made to incorporate the wishes of different rulers. The first constitution, promulgated in 1956, nine years after the country's formation in 1947, established an Islamic, federal parliamentary democracy, but did little to provide political stability.<sup>16</sup>

The constitution of 1962 under Ayub Khan advocated a presidential form of government in which the provincial authorities were reduced to becoming mere "creatures of the centre." It gave the centre the power to legislate in the provincial sphere in the national interest and governors were subject to direction by the president.<sup>17</sup> In fact, it was the centralising policies of Ayub Khan that contributed to the tensions between the East and West wings<sup>18</sup> and ultimately to the breaking away of the East wing from Pakistan. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the East wing was clamouring for more autonomy because of a lack of representation in the higher echelons of the bureaucracy and the army, the imposition of Urdu, and economic discrimination by the federal government. The reluctance of the military regime under Yahya Khan to relinquish power to the Awami party, which had emerged as the single largest party, resulted in a civil

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<sup>16</sup>For details on the 1956 constitution see Kamal Afzar, *Pakistan - Political and Constitutional Dilemmas* (Karachi: Pakistan Law House, 1987), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup>For details see *ibid.*, pp. 67-76.

<sup>18</sup>In 1956, Pakistan was brought under the one-unit scheme, to check the imbalance between a more populous Eastern Pakistan and the rest of the country. All four provinces in Western Pakistan were amalgamated to form one-unit.

war which led to the secession of East Pakistan to form the new state of Bangladesh in 1971.

The third constitution was promulgated in 1973 under the civilian leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Unlike the other two it contained several provisions for the ethno-linguistic communities,<sup>19</sup> but these did little to improve their bargaining position with the centre because the latter still exercised overriding powers over the provinces.<sup>20</sup> A similar policy was followed by General Zia to tighten the hold of the central government. He introduced the famous 8th amendment, which gave the president arbitrary powers to dismiss an elected government.<sup>21</sup> While this process was reversed by the present government of Nawaz Sharif in 1997, the centre still retains enormous powers with respect to the provinces.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Prominent among these were the rights of groups to preserve and promote a distinct language and culture (Article 28); discourage parochial, racial, tribal, sectarian and provincial prejudices (Article 33); commit the state to eradicate economic and social inequality among regions (Article 37); and acknowledge the right of provincial assemblies to adopt measures for the teaching, promotion, and use of a provincial language in addition to Urdu (Article 251). See Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, *The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (Karachi: Manager of Publications, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> Bhutto withdrew constitutional guarantees from the civil servants to make them more accountable to the civil bureaucracy, reorganised the armed forces to reduce the influence of more powerful groups in the army, and introduced constitutional amendments which sought to limit the power of the courts. The latter ensured that during an emergency, the fundamental rights remained suspended; furthermore, it gave the government the right to dissolve political parties whose activities it considered detrimental to its interests. These measures had the hidden objective of tightening the grip of federal agencies over the provinces. For example, the Constitution provided that a motion expressing want of confidence in the prime minister must also name his successor. It could be moved during the budget session and once a motion like this was defeated, a subsequent one could not be tabled for the next six months.

<sup>21</sup> For the text of the 8th amendment see Ahmed Shuja Pasha, *Pakistan - A Political Study*, Appendix-D (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1995), pp. 310-21.

<sup>22</sup> The 8th amendment was used by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to dismiss prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, on 6 August 1990 on grounds of corruption and inability to control the deteriorating situation in Sindh. He used it again in April 1993 to dismiss the government of Nawaz Sharif. For details see Samina Yasmeen, "Democracy in Pakistan: The Third Dismissal," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, no. 6, June 1994, pp. 572-88.

Unlike in India, where no one region or ethnic group exercises complete dominance over other states or communities, the centre-state relations in Pakistan stem from the asymmetrical nature of the federal structure, which gives the Punjabis overwhelming power over other groups such as the Sindhis, Pushtuns and Baluch. Punjabi dominance is often viewed as control of the centre over the provinces. After the loss of Bengal in 1971 Punjabis constituted nearly 60 percent of the population of Pakistan and supplied 70 percent of military personnel. A quota system of recruitment to the services, based on regional affiliation, has failed to give adequate representation to other groups. Disaffection ensuing from such differences has often taken the shape of ethnic conflicts, which, when pushed, become secessionist in character.

### **The Baluch**

The Baluch movement was one such example which came close on the heels of the formation of Bangladesh, and threatened the integrity of the Pakistani state. The federal government in Pakistan has employed various strategies to keep the Baluch in check. From brute force to devious manoeuvring to conciliatory gestures, the rulers have used different means to push their political agenda since the formation of Pakistan in 1947. Similar policies continued under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia ul Haq. Bhutto started out by letting the people of Baluchistan have a government of their own. But his insatiable quest for power and his overwhelming desire to control his opponents led to the dismissal of the democratically elected government of Baluchistan in 1973, leading to a five-year-long civil war in the province.

Zia followed a more cautious approach. He realised that the Baluch could never wage a full-fledged war against the state, given the inherent factionalism among the various leaders of the tribes, and he adopted a more conciliatory approach. However, despite the variations and shifts in strategy, the governments of both Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia ul Haq succeeded in overpowering the Baluch, leading to the ultimate decline of the movement by the beginning of the 1980s. The might of the Pakistani state proved to be far too great for the Baluch to resist and the government was able to crush the possibility of a rebellion in the coming years. Ironically enough, the democratic regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto used more force to keep the Baluch in check than the military dictatorship of Zia ul Haq. This section discusses the policies of each of the rulers and studies their subsequent impact on the Baluch cause.

*Relations of the Baluch with the federal government (1947-71)*

Relations between the Baluch and the Pakistani state have been strained since 1947. In the following year, resistance by the Khan of Kalat to incorporation in Pakistan was met with military takeover by Pakistan's forces.<sup>23</sup> The Baluch have ever since been involved in some sort of confrontation with the federal government. A fierce battle was waged by the Baluch against the one-unit scheme, which sought to establish parity between the East and West wings of Pakistan by the merger of the provinces of West Pakistan into one-unit.

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<sup>23</sup>For details on the accession of Baluchistan to Pakistan see Janmahmad, *Essays on Baluch National Struggle in Pakistan - Emergence Dimensions Repercussions* (Quetta: Gosha -e-Adab, 1989), pp. 173-96.

In 1959, there was a campaign of repression against the Baluch. Several hundred armed men, led by the eighty-year-old Nauroz Khan, took to the arid hills and fought back. The incident started with the arrest of Ahmad Yar Khan, the ex-ruler of Kalat state, in 1958; Khan was divested of all distinctions, privileges and annuities conferred upon him by the Pakistan government for allegedly organising a force of 80,000 men against the Pakistani state.<sup>24</sup> Agitation against his arrest sparked a series of protests in other parts of Baluchistan, intensifying army operations. By July 1963, guerrilla camps had been set up in the Jhalawan and Marri areas to impart training to the insurgents. The hostilities continued for almost a year without much respite on either side. Realising the futility of its actions, the Ayub Khan regime offered to negotiate and offered amnesty to Baluch leaders, who were released on the mercy appeal of the sardars of the Kalat and Quetta division.<sup>25</sup> But some, like Nauroz Khan's son and six others, were arrested and hanged, provoking more discontent and anger among the Baluch against the federal government.<sup>26</sup>

The resignation of President Ayub Khan on 25 March 1969 and the coming of General Yahya Khan as the Chief Martial Law Administrator on 31 March 1969, was followed by more unrest. Yahya Khan dissolved the one-unit scheme and revived the four former provinces of Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the North Western Frontier Province. The Baluch wanted to revert to the arrangement

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<sup>24</sup>According to Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, the drama of his arrest was staged "simply because President Sikander Mirza wanted to put the country under martial rule in order to keep himself in power by avoiding the general elections. Baluchistan was chosen as the starting point of the nefarious action which was designed to be applied to the whole of Pakistan later." Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch, *Inside Baluchistan, Political Autobiography of Khan-E-Azam, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1975), p. 191.

<sup>25</sup>*Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 28 January 1967.

<sup>26</sup>Tariq Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

which existed prior to the one-unit scheme, in which the Baluchistan States Union and their leased areas worked as a separate administrative unit without being a part of the Quetta division. This was, however, not acceptable to Yahya Khan.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Baluch under Bhutto (1971-77)*

Bhutto held a lot of hope and promise for Pakistan when he took over as president on 20 December 1971. As noted earlier, the 1973 constitution was a harbinger of federalism and an advance over its predecessors in that it was more sensitive to the needs of ethnic minorities. But Bhutto pursued both developmental and centralising strategies as part of his carrot and stick policy to deal with the Baluch. When the full-scale tribal insurrection broke out in 1973-74, Bhutto used the stick and wasted the advantage he had gained by opting for a military solution instead of engaging in tactful negotiations. He followed this with the carrot by lavish funding to develop the province.

### *Centralising policies*

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was in control of Punjab and Sindh, but had very little support in either NWFP or Baluchistan.<sup>28</sup> Following the 1970-71 elections, the National Awami Party (NAP) and the Jamiat-ul-Islam (JUI), formed a democratically elected

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<sup>27</sup>For details on the proposed Baluchistan States Union see Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-202.

<sup>28</sup>In the general elections of 1970, the PPP had won only one seat in the national assembly from NWFP, where it polled less than 15 percent of the popular vote and none at all from Baluchistan where its share of votes was a mere two percent. It has also performed poorly in the provincial assemblies, having captured only four out of 40 seats in the NWFP and none of the twenty seats in Baluchistan.

government in Baluchistan after winning 11 out of 20 provincial assembly seats in the province. Bhutto wanted to appoint one of his supporters, Ghaus Baksh Raisani, as the governor of Baluchistan. But coming under immense pressure from the NAP and the JUI, a tripartite agreement was signed between the three parties (NAP, JUI and PPP) on 6 March 1972.<sup>29</sup> It was agreed that the NAP and the JUI would form their own governments in the two provinces and consequently, Mir Baksh Bizenjo and Arbab Sikandar became the governors Baluchistan and NWFP respectively.

The White Paper on Baluchistan ruled that the appointment of the Governors of Baluchistan and NWFP on the recommendation NAP, which was not the ruling party in the federal government (it had won 6 out of 139 seats in the national assembly), was the first instance of its kind in a parliamentary democracy. The paper asserted that this departure from convention was made possible by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the interests of consolidating national unity.<sup>30</sup> It was clear that the appointments were conceded more as a favour than as a matter of right to the Baluchistan government.

It was thus not surprising when, soon after the formation of the government, disagreements between the centre and the provincial government arose on a number of issues. The federal government alleged that the NAP withheld cooperation from the centre and their leaders indulged in agitational activity on several fronts. These included restrictions on the activities of the federal Pakistan Coast

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<sup>29</sup>For details on the Tripartite agreement see Satish Kumar, *The New Pakistan* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), pp. 10-14.

<sup>30</sup>*White Paper on Baluchistan* (Rawalpindi: Government of Pakistan, October 1974), p. 11. For the distribution of seats in the 1970 elections see *White Paper on Baluchistan*, p. 14.



Guards to some select areas of Baluchistan for which they had to seek permission from the provincial government in Las Bela; the increased smuggling of arms, food grains and livestock across the border (also blamed on the provincial government); attacks on the new settlers in the Pat Feeder area; and the ouster of the Baluchistan Reserve Force from the province.<sup>31</sup> Bhutto began to fear the rising popularity of the NAP in the province which could undermine his authority.

The NAP-JUI coalition had ruled for less than a year when it was dismissed by Z.A. Bhutto in February 1973 on grounds of lawlessness and failure to comply with central government directives. Governor Bizenjo and Chief Minister Ataullah Mengal were removed and replaced by Nawab Akbar Bugti and Jam Ghulam Quadir respectively. The dismissal was precipitated by the discovery of arms in the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad. It was believed that they were to be used by the NAP in an insurrection. In early April 1973, less than six weeks after the ouster of the provincial government, Baluch guerrillas began to ambush army convoys.

To the Baluch, the dismissal of their elected government and the arrest of their leaders was reason enough to launch another war against the state. The federal government responded by arresting Bizenjo, Mengal and Marri and stationing the army in the province.<sup>32</sup> The army was brought in to quell the disturbances and restore normalcy in the province. The government also sought to create an infrastructure which would break the resistance of the tribal sardars;

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<sup>31</sup>For details see *White Paper on Baluchistan*, pp. 15-19.

<sup>32</sup>For details see *Dawn* (Karachi), 21 July 1976.

road building was undertaken on a large scale to weaken the strongholds of the Baluch tribes. Determined to keep the army in the province, the government sought to justify its presence, stating that

in the initial stages, the Army's operational activities were confined to intensive patrolling, picquetting, show of force and taking retaliatory actions against hostiles who fired at its posts and pickets.....the army's presence in the Jhalawan area, and its demonstrated capability of reaching inaccessible hide outs.... contributed substantially towards the restoration of law and order and instilling confidence among the law abiding tribesmen.<sup>33</sup>

The situation, however, showed little sign of improvement. By July 1974, the Baluch guerrillas had blocked the main roads linking Baluchistan with surrounding provinces, disrupted rail links, and had even begun to obstruct oil drilling and survey operations. For the next two years, Baluchistan was a battlefield, where a sophisticated army was pitched against a guerrilla force. As the tension and hostilities increased, the army launched Operation Chamalang on 3 September 1974. This dealt a heavy blow to the Baluchi guerrillas. Some 15,000 Marris were cornered; these included families who had gone to the valley to graze their cattle as well as the *Pararis* or guerrillas who fought against the federal forces.<sup>34</sup> According to Selig Harrison, "the *Pararis* were never able to regain their military initiative in the three ensuing years of savage but increasingly uncoordinated fighting."<sup>35</sup>

The White Paper maintained that the operation in the province was a conciliatory campaign designed to make Baluchistan an equal partner in Pakistan's national enterprise.<sup>36</sup> The government would still not

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<sup>33</sup>*White Paper on Baluchistan*, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>34</sup>The state had at its disposal F-86, Mirage fighter planes and Huey Cobras.

<sup>35</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow, Soviet Temptations and the Emergence of Baluch Nationalism* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), pp. 38-39.

<sup>36</sup>*White Paper on Baluchistan*, op. cit., p. 44.

acknowledge the gravity of the situation, and when 5,000 Marri tribal leaders surrendered to the army, it declared on 15 October 1974 that organised resistance to legal authority in Baluchistan which more precisely meant insurgency against the state had come to an end."<sup>37</sup> However, the civil war continued and there was little sign of abatement, much less a return to peace in the province.

The guerrillas derived their strength from two major organisations that had sprung up to advance the Baluch cause. These provided both material and moral support to the warring tribes. The Baluch Peoples Liberation Front (BPLF) was based on a mix of Baluch nationalist sentiments and Marxist thought. Led by Mir Hazar Ramkhani, it attracted several intellectuals of non-Baluch origin from affluent backgrounds and stood for the liberation of all the oppressed minorities in Pakistan. The Baluch Students Organisation (BSO), was started in 1967 to fight against the one-unit scheme; it grew rapidly and boasted more than 25,000 Baluch members between 1967 and 1981. It served as an important source of guerrilla recruits during the insurgency.<sup>38</sup>

The government's strategy of countering Baluch resistance with the use of force did not help to control the situation. Disorder and violence continued to paralyse the provincial administration, with frequent dismissals of government.<sup>39</sup> Baluchistan was placed directly under federal rule. Though after six months, on 30 June 1976, the

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<sup>37</sup>*White Paper on Baluchistan*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>38</sup>For details on the structure of the organisations see Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., pp. 72-87.

<sup>39</sup>For example, in May 1974 Governor Akbar Bugti was replaced with Ahmed Yar Khan and in December 1975 Chief Minister Jaam Quadir's government was dismissed amidst reports of rifts between him and the governor, and accusations of failure of the provincial government to utilise funds allotted to it by the federal government.

president's rule reverted to governor's rule, this still fell short of the requirements of provincial autonomy as laid down in the constitution. Political activities were suspended. This was followed by a ban on the NAP; ninety members of the party stood accused of treason and fifty arrested in what came to be known as the Hyderabad Conspiracy Case.

Bhutto's policies of forcing the Baluch into abject submission through the use of force had clearly made the problem worse. His *modus operandi* of choosing and dismissing governors and replacing them with people whose credentials were equally suspect reflected little more than his personal quest for power. The White Paper brought out by Zia accused Bhutto of nepotism and electoral malpractice.<sup>40</sup> It was alleged that the government had offered the release of the Baluch triumvirate, Bizenjo, Chief Minister Mengal, and Khair Bux Marri, who were arrested in August 1973, in exchange for a political settlement. The prime minister had supposedly held out an assurance that NAP leader Sardar Khair Baksh Marri would be released if he promised to give up his policy of opposing development work in the Marri areas.<sup>41</sup> Bhutto was flouting all democratic norms in his reluctance to hand power to the Baluch leaders.

#### *Developmental strategies of Bhutto*

The centralising tendencies of the Bhutto government, described above, were accompanied by some measure of appeasement in the

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<sup>40</sup>White Paper on the Performance of the Bhutto Regime, Vol. 3, Annex 1 (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 1979), pp. A1-A2.

<sup>41</sup>Islamic Republic of Pakistan An Amnesty International Report Including the Findings of a Mission to Pakistan 23 April-12 May 1976 (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1977), p. 41.

form of developmental activity on a scale almost unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. These were the carrots that Bhutto offered to the Baluch. During the first three five-year plans, development outlays to the province were a mere Rs 25 million,<sup>42</sup> with government investment never exceeding Rs 30 million in any year during the entire decade preceding 1970.<sup>43</sup>

Under Bhutto, economic aid accelerated dramatically in the 1970s. The late prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, increased the budgetary allocation to the province. The government believed that lack of physical infrastructure, such as water, power and roads, was the principal obstacle to development and that little progress could be achieved in agriculture and industry unless appropriate utilities were available. Vast amounts of money were invested in building roads; opening schools, colleges and technical institutions; extending credit and banking facilities; electrification; harnessing groundwater resources; and installing tubewells for irrigation. Plans were drawn up for industrial development to process ferro chrome, rice, paper, and cement.<sup>44</sup>

The White Paper brought out by Bhutto clearly stated:

The increased allocation of federal funds to Baluchistan is indicative not only of the federal governments' concern for the province but of its anxiety to remove the disparity between Baluchistan and the other provinces as fast as national resources and Baluchistan's absorptive capacity will permit.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>The Sixth Five Year Plan, 1983-88, p. 187. Cited in Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism*, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>43</sup>The exchange rate on 11 February 1999 was Rs. 51.29 to a US dollar.

<sup>44</sup>For details see, *White Paper on Baluchistan*, op. cit., pp. 30-38.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 33.

During the Bhutto period (1971-77), federal funds for Baluchistan rose from Rs. 120 million in 1972-73, to Rs. 210 million in 1974. In addition expenditure through federal agencies was Rs. 150 million annually.<sup>46</sup> As compared to the federal expenditures, the revenues of the province amounted to only Rs. 88 million, which increased by another Rs. 138 million in 1974-75 as a result of the central government transferring the funds collected through royalties and excise duties on Sui gas to the province.<sup>47</sup>

The National Finance Commission recommended a share of 3.9 percent of national tax allocations for Baluchistan as compared to 57.9 percent for Punjab, 16.6 percent for NWFP and 21.6 percent for Sindh on the basis of their population figures. But in addition to this, another \$ 5 million were paid to Baluchistan by the federal government as subvention on account of its underdeveloped state in 1975-76; followed by another \$19 million in the subsequent year in subventions over and above its population entitlement, as well as picking up a provincial budgetary deficit of \$ 11.9 million.<sup>48</sup>

The Bhutto regime also pursued vigorous development policies in Baluchistan with a view to creating a modern infrastructure, improving the means of communication, and helping in the spread of education, development of health facilities, etc. For example, in 1949 there were only 186 primary schools, 23 secondary schools, and 60 adult education centres in the entire province, serving only 18, 500 students. By 1978, there were 2,848 educational institutions of all types

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<sup>46</sup>White Paper on Baluchistan, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>47</sup>Khalid B. Sayed, *Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), p. 134.

<sup>48</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 169.

in Baluchistan, with 1.6 million students. These included 2,372 primary schools, 426 secondary schools, 19 junior colleges, 9 colleges, 5 technical colleges, and Baluchistan University.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, in the health sector hospitals like Sandeman Provincial Hospital (Quetta), Fatima Jinnah Sanatorium( Quetta) and Civil Hospital (Turbat) were expanded and upgraded.

Besides this, massive programmes for village electrification; development of water resources through installation of tube wells, irrigation facilities were also launched to improve the socio-economic conditions in the province.<sup>50</sup> New roads such as the Shahrah-i-Maiwand linking Sibi with Maiwand; RCD highway connecting Karachi and Quetta were constructed to open up the province and link it with Punjab, Sindh and NWFP.

In addition to putting large amounts of money into the province, the Bhutto government undertook many relief operations to resettle Marri families who had given up arms and had come down from the mountains. In 1974, nearly Rs 50,000 were being set aside to enable Marri tribesmen to lead a settled life. They were provided with fertilisers, tractors and bulldozers to help carry out regular farming.<sup>51</sup>

On the social front, the government carried out a major reform by abolishing the sardari system in April 1976. This provided a much-needed shot in the arm for the government as it sought to curtail the power of the sardars in the province and also contain the tribes, who were still hiding in the mountains in support of their sardars. Firm in

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<sup>49</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>50</sup>*White Paper on Baluchistan*, op. cit., pp. 33-36..

<sup>51</sup>*Pakistan Times* (Rawalpindi), 17 October 1974.

its mission to modernise the province, the White Paper on Baluchistan stated:

There is no escaping the compulsions of modernity. As the tribal mould begins to break, the people's mental horizons broaden and mass communications become a need. The Government is responsive to this basic requirement for ending Baluchistan's insularity.<sup>52</sup>

The Baluch, however, thought otherwise. Leaders like Khair Bux Marri felt that the government wanted to modernise the Baluch, but in their own way. Most of the roads built in Baluchistan, he declared, were

not for our benefit but to make it easier for the military to control us and for the Punjabis to rob us. The issue is not whether to develop, but whether to develop with or without autonomy.<sup>53</sup>

But despite such contradictory assertions the authors of the document defended their actions on the basis that

the path of least resistance is not open to a government which has accepted the obligation of fighting primitivism and poverty and disease. Whatever the strain, the Government of Pakistan could not but actively collaborate in Baluchistan's efforts and respond to Baluchistan's need, to end its backwardness.<sup>54</sup>

### *Causes of federal intervention*

The official line taken by the Pakistan government was that federal intervention was necessary to stimulate socio-economic advancement and create better conditions for the functioning of representative institutions in Baluchistan.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>White Paper on Baluchistan, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

<sup>53</sup>Interview with Khair Bux Marri. Cited in Selig Harrison, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>54</sup>White Paper on Baluchistan, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>55</sup>Dawn (Karachi), 4 January 1976.



On closer examination this seems a little far-fetched. In the normal course of events, the suspension of democratic rights is considered an extreme step, taken when the administrative machinery breaks down, or a ruling party or coalition loses its majority. If indeed the purpose of federal intervention was to alleviate economic conditions, then a similar operation should have been carried out in the NWFP, whose per capita income in 1969-70 was even lower than that of Baluchistan (Rs. 254 as against Rs. 355 in Baluchistan). Moreover, given Baluchistan's history, the gap between Baluchistan and the other provinces was so wide that it would have taken at least a few decades for it to come up to the level of other provinces. Intervention by the federal government would at best only bring about an improvement. Further, the process of development would have to involve the people of Baluchistan and their representatives. The fear of exploitation was deeply embedded in the Baluch minds. While the Bhutto government spent a lot of money to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Baluch, not much was done to increase their participation in the political process. (See Chapter 3).

It is clear that notwithstanding the developmental programmes and infusion of resources into the province, Bhutto's centralising policies and reluctance to share power with the NAP led to the civil war in Baluchistan. He became absorbed in the relentless pursuit of power and used coercive measures to the extreme. The expenditure on federal security force increased by 296 percent, from Rs. 36.4 million during 1973-74 to Rs. 107.7 million for 1976-77; and expenditure on civil armed forces rose from Rs. 192.5 million during 1974-75 to Rs. 388.2 million for 1976-77<sup>56</sup>. Once the insurgency acquired graver

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<sup>56</sup>Khalid B. Sayed, *Politics in Pakistan*, op. cit., p. 107-8.

proportions the federal government found it difficult to extricate itself from the prevailing situation in the province.

### *Baluchistan under Zia*

The carrot and stick policy of Bhutto continued under General Zia ul Haq, though the carrot was used more than the stick. Zia realised quite early on that the Baluch question needed to be handled with a greater deal of care and sensitivity, so as to not provoke another war in the province. Zia worked on the Baluch with calculated ease and even ordered the army units to maintain a low profile. He viewed Bhutto's policies as needlessly provocative and was careful to avoid hurting Baluch pride.

One of the first gestures Zia made towards the Baluch was to release 6,000 of their prisoners who were said to have been tortured in the Kohlu and Loralai prisons. Mengal, Bizenjo and Marri were released from prison in 1977. The following year General Zia disbanded the Hyderabad tribunal; this was regarded by an office bearer of the defunct NAP as the "elimination of one of the wrong doings of Bhuttoism in Baluchistan."<sup>57</sup> In addition, a general amnesty was declared for Baluchistan on 1 January 1978 for all those who left their homes during the insurrection.<sup>58</sup> According to one report, Rs. 5 million was sanctioned for the rehabilitation of those affected in the 1973-77 insurgency.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>*Dawn*, 2 January 1978.

<sup>58</sup> *Public Opinion Trends and Analyses (POT)*, Pakistan series, Vol. 6, part 15, 21 January 1978, p. 225.

<sup>59</sup> Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

However, talks between the Baluch leaders and General Zia were discontinued in 1978 when the triumvirate protested against the appointment of Punjabi bureaucrats to serve in Baluchistan. The Baluch leaders insisted on the replacement of Raja Ahmed Khan, the chief secretary in the Baluchistan state government, who was a Punjabi, but Zia refused to heed their request. He tried to reach a compromise by bringing in Lt. Gen. Rahimuddin Khan, a non-Punjabi military intellectual, as provincial governor in place of his Punjabi predecessor, Lt. Gen. Ghulam Mohammad, but this did not win over the Baluch.<sup>60</sup>

In 1979, Ataullah Mengal went on record to say that Zia's regime had failed to deliver what it set out to. He claimed that those members of the Marri tribe who had returned following the amnesty were arrested and kept in interrogation camps; arrest warrants and cases were still not withdrawn; and the militia was still patrolling the area.<sup>61</sup> It was clear that if the Zia regime had been generous in allocating funds for the development of the province, it appeared to have been equally firm in using coercion as and when it was needed. The decision of the military regime to hang Abdul Hamid Baluch for attempting to murder a recruiting officer for the Sultan of Oman created bitterness amongst the Baluch, especially since the Baluchistan High Court had already ruled that Hamid Baluch was not responsible for the alleged killing.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>61</sup>*Dawn*, 2 July 1979.

<sup>62</sup>Lawrence Lifshultz, "Pakistan: A Fundamental Debate," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 111, 13 March 1981, pp. 21-22.

On substantive issues of autonomy, the military dictatorship of Zia was as unresponsive as the democratic government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. According to Zia, while Baluchistan was important, the Baluch problem was greatly exaggerated by foreign observers.<sup>63</sup> Expressing little or no sympathy for the concept of a multinational Pakistan, he did not want to make any amendments to the 1973 constitution, which gave the centre enormous powers to intervene and dismiss an elected state legislature. This suited Zia's game plan and the circumstances that brought him to power: Zia seized power from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on 5 July 1977 but did not have the mandate of the people to rule the country. Despite promises of elections, he postponed them indefinitely, placed a ban on political activities, and limited the freedom of the press.

General Zia's martial law regime made it difficult for political parties to operate. With Bhutto's removal and Zia's apparently conciliatory policies, the Baluch movement came under stress from intra-group and inter-group cleavages, and a clash of various personalities, ideologies, strategies and goals. The differences among the Pushtun and Baluch leaders also became more apparent, with the Baluch seeing the Pushtun leadership as more accommodative towards the centre. This led to a split in the party, and the formation of a separate party, the Pakistan National Party (PNP), successor of the disbanded NAP.<sup>64</sup> The new party was led by Bizenjo, who espoused greater

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<sup>63</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>64</sup>The breakup within the ranks of the NAP occurred between the NAP Baluch leaders and their counterparts in the NWFP during the 1973-77 insurgency. Bizenjo, the leader of the Baluch NAP, was propagating the idea of "separate nationalities": he argued that each of the minorities constituted a separate nationality whereas Wali Khan, leader of the Pushtuns, wanted a more moderate approach. Amidst these differences, the NAP split and its Baluch wing constituted the National Democratic Party.

provincial autonomy within an overall Pakistani framework. However, within six months of its formation it was outlawed. Most Baluch leaders belonging to the PNP were forced to remain silent or operate from underground.

The BPLF which, by 1980, had started talking about "Greater Baluchistan," including all Baluch in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, received a severe setback due to unsettled conditions in Afghanistan, which had provided sanctuary to a number of guerrillas. Its leadership had also begun to falter by 1981, amidst differences between those who favoured an Independent Baluchistan, like Khair Bux Marri and Mir Hazar, the leader of the front during the insurgency, and its non-Baluch members, who favoured a nationalist struggle for the whole of Pakistan. Many leaders of the Baluch Students Organisation were rounded up and arrested while Marri and Mengal went into political exile in Europe in 1979 and started seeking support for an independent Baluchistan from outside.

General Zia by this time had also begun to patronise other leaders from among the Baluch and Pushtuns, with whom he could establish a better working relationship. An example of this was Doda Khan Zarakzai, a member of the Muslim League who had co-operated with successive federal governments and commanded as much support as Mengal in the tribal community. Zia also cultivated such influential Pushtuns, as the landowning Jomezai family to counter the influence of sardars opposed to his policies.<sup>65</sup> Others influential tribal leaders such as Prince Moinuddin Baluch (younger brother of the Khan of Kalat) and Zafrullah Khan Jamali served at the cabinet level. Many

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<sup>65</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit, p. 153.

such as Mir Nabi Baksh Zehri, the marble king and other mining entrepreneurs belonging to the Jamali and Raisani tribes extended support to the centre in lieu of rich economic dividends.<sup>66</sup> By 1980, most members of the Mengal and Bizenjo tribes had returned to their homes and the Zia government had withdrawn most of the cases against the tribesmen.

With regard to economic development, Zia pursued vigorous development policies towards the province. According to General Zia, economic underdevelopment was the crux of the entire political issue and with development, 80 percent of the problem would be solved.<sup>67</sup> By 1978-79, special subventions to the province amounted to \$ 24.8 million and the annual budgetary deficit covered by Islamabad was in the range of \$28.2 million.<sup>68</sup>

Like his predecessors, General Zia accorded the highest priority to building infrastructure, especially roads, telephones, electricity, and to means of communication. Under the Special Developmental plan, (1982-88) Rs. 20 billion was set aside for education, industrialisation, communication and rural development projects.<sup>69</sup>

Besides the Annual Development Programme financed by the federal government, a special plan was prepared by the provincial government at a cost of Rs. 19,39,320 million with a foreign exchange component of Rs. 4,657 million which was provided by friendly countries and international financial institutions. The Kuwait fund,

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<sup>66</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>67</sup>Tahir Amin, *Ethno-National Movements in Pakistan, Domestic and International Factors* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1988), p. 179.

<sup>68</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 179.

for example, made a commitment to provide electricity to villages; and small irrigation schemes and water supply to Quetta and Gadani.<sup>70</sup> Flourite, stone and glass industries were set up in Kalat, Sirki and Quetta respectively in 1978 under General Zia.<sup>71</sup>

Within three years of General Zia's coming to power, 265 villages had been electrified in Baluchistan. Important roads built during Zia's time included the the Loralai-Dera Ghazi Khan Road and the 160-mile Ormara-Liara Road providing the shortest route between Karachi and the coastal towns of Baluchistan.<sup>72</sup>

From 1977 to 1984/85, a record Rs. 4,000 million had been injected into Baluchistan. Among the major projects completed in this time were the extension of Sui gas to Quetta; completion of the RCD highway; the New Quetta airport, airstrips at Pasni and Turbat, a TV complex in Quetta, radio stations at Khuzdar and Turbat, and the completion of the Bolan Medical College.<sup>73</sup>

While the Baluch complained of the lack of development in their province and the exploitative nature of Islamabad, the federal government believed that the Baluch, who constituted a mere 4 percent of the population, were already receiving funds out of proportion to their population.

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<sup>70</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol. 9, part 191, 22 September 1981, p. 2207.

<sup>71</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol. 6, part 23, 30 January 1978, p. 319.

<sup>72</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol. 13, part 244, 15 November 1985, p. 2021.

<sup>73</sup>POT (Pakistan series), Vol. 7, part 232, 7 December 1984, pp. 3752- 53.

According to Selig Harrison,

In the eyes of Pakistani and Iranian leaders, Baluch demands for regional autonomy constitute, at best, a thinly disguised form of blackmail designed to extort a disproportionate share of the benefits of economic progress or, at worst, a prelude to eventual secession.<sup>74</sup>

With large flows of money into the province, the lack of any visible improvement was attributed not to lack of effort on the part of the federal government but to massive misappropriation of funds at the provincial level.<sup>75</sup> According to one report, the Baluchistan government was receiving more than Rs 700 million annually as development expenditure in 1979 but funds were not managed in a judicious manner. Revenue in the form of grant-in-aid from the federal government rose from Rs 12.6 million in 1971-72 to Rs 717.2 million in 1978-79.<sup>76</sup>

The process of accommodation was slow but the federal government achieved its goal of quelling the Baluch rebellion. Some tribal chiefs maintained an ambivalent attitude towards the Zia regime: overtly, they opposed his rule, but in practice, they availed themselves of the opportunities offered by the co-optive policies of the regime. With the passage of time, the leaders were bought or mollified by the government, rendering the Baluch cause a non-issue by the early 1980s. They accepted the compensatory money offered by Zia for the losses suffered by the tribes during the military action under Bhutto and also accepted the amnesty offered by Zia to the tribesmen and their families returning from Afghanistan.

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<sup>74</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p.149.

<sup>75</sup>Interview with Mubashir Hassan, Minister of Finance, Planning and Development in the Bhutto government from 1971 to 1974, New Delhi, 4 September 1996.

<sup>76</sup>Government of Pakistan *10 years of Pakistan in Statistics, 1972-82* (Karachi: Federal Bureau of Statistics, 1983), p. 254.



According to Selig Harrison, "when there is repression everyone rallies together to fight against it; but when there is no repression one becomes more vulnerable to blandishments offered to divide and rule."<sup>77</sup> Moreover, it was much easier to co-opt the Baluch because of their small numbers, modest levels of socio-economic development, and fractured leadership.<sup>78</sup> Given the low-levels of mobilisation, participation was restricted to certain tribes, robbing the movement of its popular character.

According to Hasan Askari Rizvi,

Once the phase of idealism was over, the movement could never regain its strength. Disillusionment with external powers such as the Soviet Union made the leaders realise that the option of independence was not viable. The emphasis shifted more towards Baluch rights and less towards a Baluch state.<sup>79</sup>

To conclude, it may be said that the strategies of the state which were a mix of coercion and economic concessions, were an important factor in determining the course of the Baluch movement. The reluctance of the Baluch to shed their tribal inhibitions and adapt to the growing pressures of modern day living, their extremely small numbers - which limited their political, social and economic participation in the federal structure - and the absence of a coherent and well-organised political leadership and middle class also contributed to the decline of the movement. But their significance lies in the fact that they

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<sup>77</sup>Interview with Selig Harrison, Research analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, on 27th May 1996.

<sup>78</sup>Ifthikar Malik, a noted scholar, puts the theory of a "trans elites regional alliance" to explain the co-optation of some Baluch by the centre. He opined that this class was self-perpetuating and hence leaders like Mengal, Bizenjo and Marri were easily cajoled. Interview with Iftikar Malik at Oxford, 3 July 1996.

<sup>79</sup>Interview with Hasan Askari Rizvi, South Asia Institute, Columbia University, New York, 31 May 1996.

in the fact that they simplified the task of the federal agencies in overcoming the Baluch resistance.

### **The Indian state and the sikhs**

The Khalistan movement was a result of many factors, but what precipitated the conflict were political issues, more specifically the struggle between the Congress party and the Akalis to capture power in Punjab.<sup>80</sup> This section deals with the strategies of the federal governments in dealing with the Punjab crisis. However, in order to do so it is necessary to examine the nature of inter-party conflict in Punjab. More specifically it will look at the Akali Dal, the regional party representing the interests of the Sikhs, and the Congress Party both at the state and the national level. The main political demands of the Sikhs have revolved around Chandigarh, the disputed capital of Punjab and Haryana, and the distribution of river waters. The delay in granting concessions on these issues, has been one of the major factors facilitating the rise of Sikh religious leaders like Bhindranwale.

#### *Party politics in Punjab*

The Akali Dal and the Congress have been the two major political forces in Punjab and have alternately shared power in the state. The dilemma for the Akali party has been that despite being a strong

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<sup>80</sup>This view has been shared by a number of scholars. Paul Brass treats the changing political conditions as the causal factor but concedes that changes in the socio-economic context provided additional stimulus and a recruiting basis for terrorist violence among the Sikh youth in Punjab. See Paul Brass, "The Punjab Crisis and the Unity of India," in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy, An Analysis of Changing State Society Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 169-213. Also see Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent, India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 353.

advocate of the Sikh culture and religion, it has never enjoyed the full support of the Sikhs. Its narrow support base comprises the Jat Sikhs and segments of the urban Sikh population. Its rival, the Congress party, has been more effective in state politics, relying on Hindus, scheduled castes, and segments of the non-scheduled caste rural Sikh population.<sup>81</sup>

The Akali party has never been able to form a government on its own. Between 1967 and 1972, and again from 1977 to 1980, several Akali-Jan Sangh coalition governments were formed in Punjab but they did not offer a stable alternative to the Congress.<sup>82</sup> In the 1972 state elections, the Akalis could secure only 27.6 percent of the vote compared to Congress's 42.8 percent. The party was beset with problems and remained splintered right through the 1980s. The lack of a leader who could command respect from the Akalis and the Sikh masses alike weakened the movement considerably and prompted some of its leaders to join hands with the militants. Other veteran leaders like Prakash Singh Badal adopted a stronger anti-centre posture.

Consequently the Akali Dal split into many factions and squandered the advantage of being a unified voice for the Sikh community. A

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<sup>81</sup>On the average percentage of votes polled for different parties in the six Punjab legislative assembly elections between 1967 and 1985, the Congress led with 39.4 percent; the Akali Dal (Sant Longowal) had 29 percent, the Jan Sangh/Janata/Bhartiya Janata party (BJP), 8.4 percent, the Communist Party of India (CPI), 5.7 percent, the Communist Party (Marxist) (CPM), 3.3 percent, other parties, 3.6 percent, and independents, 10.8 percent. See Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), Table 6. 2, p. 226.

<sup>82</sup>In 1967, it formed a government with all parties except the Congress, which had 48 out of 104 seats. The Congress manipulation of dissident Akali factions resulted in the fall of the Gurnam Singh ministry within eight months. Another Akali coalition government with the Jan Sangh lasted from February 1969 to March 1971 but fell when controversy over Punjab's official language resulted in an Akali-Jan Sangh split.

three-way split developed between Tohra, who became the SGPC chief, Jagdev Singh Talwandi, who became president of the Akali Dal, and Prakash Singh Badal, who assumed charge of the ministerial wing. In 1980, the Badal group joined hands with Tohra to support the moderate leader, Harchand Singh Longowal, to remove Talwandi as the leader of the Akali party. Talwandi proceeded to form his own rival Akali party.

At the same time, attempts by the Congress government at the centre to undercut the Akali Dal weakened its position further. It is widely believed that Bhindranwale was a creation of Giani Zail Singh, former president of India and trusted aide of Mrs Gandhi, who propped him up as an alternative to the Akali party. In fact, according to Atul Kohli,

The repeated failure of the Akalis to wrest power from Congress had left open a political space for those who argued that increased militancy was the only means for protecting Sikh interests. Bhindranwale stepped into that space.<sup>83</sup>

The emergence of the Dal Khalsa, one of several militant organisations started under Zail Singh's patronage, signalled the rise of extremist politics in the state.<sup>84</sup> In fact, in the 1978-79 SGPC elections, the Congress government supported the extremists, including Bhindranwale's nominees.<sup>85</sup>

Mrs Gandhi's unprecedented centralisation of power and authoritarian style, marked an entirely different relationship between the centre and the states. The imposition of president's rule in Punjab

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<sup>83</sup>Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent*, op. cit., p. 361.

<sup>84</sup> Fact admitted by S.S. Barnala, former chief minister of Punjab and leader of the Akali Dal, in an interview with the author in New Delhi on 30 May 1998.

<sup>85</sup>Rajni Kothari and Giri Deshingkar, "Punjab: The Long View" in Abida Samaiuddin (ed.), *The Punjab Crisis* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985), pp. 622-26.

in 1980 started a process of progressive disenfranchisement of the mainstream of the population. President's rule was imposed to topple state governments unfavourable to the policies of the central government. This effectively deprived the moderate Akali leaders of a political voice in Punjab.

It was thus not surprising that the Akalis, whose main ideology stemmed from being the true representatives of the Sikh community, came under immense pressure from Bhindranwale, who, as mentioned in Chapter 3, began to attract the Sikh masses with his extreme rhetoric on Sikhism. Political machinations thus commenced in which both the Akali party and the Congress started giving their tacit support to Bhindranwale for fear of a Sikh backlash.

The moderate Akali wing was concerned about losing out to Bhindranwale or other militant leaders. On 31 July 1981, the Akalis took out a large *jatha* (procession) at Amritsar to project themselves as the only ones fighting for the Sikh cause. They made emotional demands, such as renaming the express train to Amritsar "the Golden Temple Express"; banning the sale of tobacco, liquor and meat in the vicinity of the Golden Temple, and bestowing the status of "holy city" on Amritsar.

Both the Congress and the Akalis were confused on how to handle Bhindranwale. Action against him could endanger the Sikh votes, and yet no action could alienate the Hindus. Such equivocation was reflected on a number of occasions, such as Bhindranwale's arrest on 20 September 1981 for the alleged murder of Lala Jagat Narain, editor of the local newspaper, *Punjab Kesari*, and his unconditional release

the following month; the relocation of his headquarters from Chowk Mehta near Amritsar to Nanak Niwas right in the Golden Temple complex (which also housed the headquarters of Longowal, president of the Akali Dal, and the SGPC chief, Gurcharan Singh Tohra); and the murder of the DIG Punjab Police, A.S. Atwal in April 1983. It also gave terrorism a much needed stimulus.

### *The Anandpur Sahib Resolution*

The Akali demands, initially quite straightforward, developed communal overtones when the Congress government at the centre ethnicised the issue and raised the bogey of Sikh separatism to alarm Hindu voters. Concerned with their declining popularity, lack of solidarity in the rank and file of the party, and the machinations of the Congress to oust them from power, the Akali brought out the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in 1978.<sup>86</sup> It addressed the economic concerns of the Punjab along with the religious and ethnic demands of the Sikhs.

The resolution was actually not secessionist in content; but it demanded more autonomy for Punjab and protection of the cultural and religious rights of the Sikhs. At least three versions exist, each associated with particular factions of the Akali Dal. The Talwandi version, for example, is more extremist in that it asserts that the Sikhs are a historically recognised nation oppressed by the majority of India.<sup>87</sup> The resolution forms the basis of the Akali Dal's socio-

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<sup>86</sup> For the full text of the Anand Pur Sahib Resolution see Gurmit Singh, *History of Sikh Struggles* Vol. 2, Appendix 22, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1991), pp. 258-67.

<sup>87</sup> Maya Chadda, *Ethnicity, Security and Separatism in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 127.

economic agenda. All the demands were directed at the central government.

According to Jugdeep S. Chima,

the mobilisation of large segments of society by the Akali Dal, the political frustration of Akali elites and the religious symbolism of Bhindrawale was channelled toward the central government, whose political and economic centralising tendencies and highly interventionist policies were seen as primary sources of Punjab's political, economic and religious problems.<sup>88</sup>

The economic demands included an increase in land ceilings for Sikhs in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh; implementation of an economic program based on "dignity of labour"; "ameliorating the lot of the weaker sections...and the urban poor" through employment and a restructured tax system; parity between the prices of agricultural produce and industrial raw materials; expansion of medium size industries leading to rapid industrialisation, and elimination of the "exploitation of the producers of cash crops...at the hands of traders mostly Hindus."

On the cultural front it asked for the regular recitation of Gurubani on government broadcast facilities, the instruction of Sikhism in schools, and the enactment of the *All India Gurudwara Act* which was meant to transfer control of all Sikh Gurudwaras and their funds throughout India to the Akali Dal. The earlier act gave control only over the Gurudwaras in Punjab.

The resolution also demanded that Punjab be given full jurisdiction over its administration and law and that the central state be restricted

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<sup>88</sup>See Jugdeep S. Chima, "The Punjab Crisis, Governmental Centralisation and Akali-Center Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, no. 10, October 1994, p. 861.

to the management of foreign policy, defence, currency, and general communications. But the two issues that were still not resolved, and which continue to dominate the political agenda of the Akalis, are the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab in lieu of the two Hindi speaking villages of Abohar and Fazilka in Punjab and Haryana, and the distribution of river waters in the state.

These acquired added significance in view of the fact that

While up to the creation of the Punjabi suba the Akali leaders were united in their demand...creation of the Punjabi suba and their lust for power created serious differences. In addition to capturing the SGPC<sup>89</sup> and its resources the Akalis now had another and much bigger source of strength and weakness, that is capturing power in the new state.<sup>90</sup>

#### *The Chandigarh issue*

The Chandigarh issue has been a bone of contention between the federal government and the states of Punjab and Haryana. After a hunger strike by the veteran Akali leader, Sant Fateh Singh, in January 1970, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. According to the award, the actual transfer was to take place in or before January 1975. But as events unfolded, it became clear that the government had other pressing compulsions. It was not willing to make any decision that would be perceived as going against Haryana, as this could result in a loss of Hindu votes (Haryana is a predominantly Hindu state) and harm the electoral prospects of the Congress government at the centre. The late prime minister, Indira Gandhi declared in parliament that Chandigarh would go to

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<sup>89</sup>Shrimoni Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) is a body which controls all the Gurudwaras (Sikh Temples) in India.

<sup>90</sup>Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Struggle: A Retrospect* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher and Distributors, 1988), p. 166.



Punjab provided Haryana was suitably compensated and got its share of Hindi-speaking areas in Punjab.<sup>91</sup> From then on, any demand raised by Punjab made Haryana privy to the negotiation process. This made the resolution of the Chandigarh issue even more complicated because Abohar and Fazilka are situated in the heartland of Punjab and giving them to Haryana entails the construction of a corridor between the two states. As a result Chandigarh still retains its union territory status and continues to be the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

#### *The River water dispute*

On the question of river waters, the Sikhs' long-held grievance against the federal government has been that the water from the three rivers, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej flow through Punjab but an elaborate canal system diverts water to irrigate drier areas of other states like Haryana and Rajasthan. In the wake of the *Punjab Reorganisation Act* of 1966, the central government announced that Punjab would get only 23 percent of the water from its rivers while the rest would go to Rajasthan and Haryana. The constitution of India retained the principle of provincial autonomy on the subject of river waters while giving the central government the power to advise and adjudicate through legally-constituted river boards and tribunals on disputes involving co-riparian states.<sup>92</sup> This caused considerable resentment

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<sup>91</sup> *White Paper on the Punjab Agitation* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1984), p. 15.

<sup>92</sup> Article 246 (3), enjoined with entry 17 of list 11 of state subjects confers on the state legislatures the power to legislate with respect to their "waters": irrigation, canals, drainage, embankments, water storage and water power. Article 262 empowers the Union Parliament to make laws to adjudicate disputes or complaints with respect to the use, distribution or control of inter-state rivers and river valleys. See Ram Narayan Kumar, "Constitutional Perspective," *Seminar*, 398, October 1992, p. 22.

among the Akalis, who felt that the centre had no authority to allocate water from the rivers of a state which flowed only within its own territories to non-riparian states, like Rajasthan and Haryana.<sup>93</sup>

In 1981, on the initiative of the central government, a tripartite agreement was signed by the chief ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan according to which the available surplus of the three states was upgraded from 15.0 MAF to 16.32 MAF and redistributed among them.<sup>94</sup> The White paper brought out by the federal government gave different statistics but agreed that since later water flow series showed the availability of Ravi-Beas surplus waters to be 17.17 MAF (against the earlier estimated availability of 15.85 MAF) the additional quantity of water could be shared between Punjab and Haryana.<sup>95</sup>

It also said that

In the final allocation made between the two states under the 1981 agreement, the share of Punjab was raised to 4.22 MAF and the share of Haryana was retained at 3.50 MAF. In addition, out of Rajasthan's share, until such time as Rajasthan was in a position to utilise its full share, Punjab was allowed to use water which was surplus to Rajasthan's requirements.<sup>96</sup>

The Akalis, however, were not satisfied with the outcome and found the increase in their water share from 23 to 24 percent rather insignificant. After a series of discussions the matter was referred to a tribunal and still awaits a decision.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>94</sup>S. Paul Dhillon, "River Waters of Punjab: Claims and Counter Claims," *The Sikh Review*, Vol. 39, no.1, February 1991, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup>White Paper on *The Punjab Agitation*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

The federal government and the Akali leaders met several times in 1982 but failed to arrive at solutions to the river water dispute or the Chandigarh question. The centre's attitude was prompted by several factors. According to one source, "Mrs Gandhi's admirers would have it that she and her helpers were up against slippery desperate men...who could never be relied upon to hold firm to a set of demands or an agreement."<sup>97</sup> Another version stated this was largely due to the

duplicity of the central government, Mrs Gandhi's unwillingness to delegate authority and the constant attempts to manipulate Punjab events either to serve Congress (I) electoral interests or Mrs Gandhi's international reputation.<sup>98</sup>

Elections were undoubtedly an important factor in the the breakdown of talks between the centre and the Akali party. In fact, Mrs Gandhi's narrow political concerns imposed restrictions on how much the centre could concede to the Akalis, as any concession granted could potentially anger voters or influence politicians in the states of Haryana or Jammu and Kashmir. The results of the 1982-83 state elections showed a decline in Congress fortunes. The party suffered huge losses in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir and did not want to annoy the Hindu voters by giving in to the demands of the Sikhs. The Hindi belt contributes as much as 41 percent of the seats to the national parliament.

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<sup>97</sup>Robin Jeffrey, *What's Happening to India? Punjab, Ethnic Conflict and the Test for Federalism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994), p. 153.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 154.

*Strategies of the government in dealing with the Punjab crisis*

The Indian government followed policies of both conciliation and force to stem the tide of terrorist violence in the state. The assault on the Golden Temple in 1984 dealt a devastating blow to the Sikh psyche, especially as the attack damaged the Golden Temple and the adjoining Akal Takht (traditional seat of temporal power).<sup>99</sup>

A chain of events, including the assassination of Indira Gandhi in October 1984, and massive rioting in Delhi and other parts of North India, with the Sikhs clearly targeted as victims<sup>100</sup>, and the delay in bringing the guilty to trial did little to assuage wounded Sikh pride. A report brought out by two local human rights organisations alleged that

far from being spontaneous expressions of madness and of popular grief and anger at Mrs Gandhi's assassination as made out by the authorities, the riots were the outcome of a well organised plan marked by acts of both deliberate commission and omission by important politicians of the Congress and by authorities in the administration.<sup>101</sup>

The Sikhs had begun to feel alienated from the rest of the country.

*Conciliatory strategies: The Rajeev Longowal accord*

Realising the errors of past actions, the Congress government under the new prime minister, Rajeev Gandhi (1984-89), began on a conciliatory note, though it was determined to pursue a hard-line

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<sup>99</sup>For details on Operation Blue Star, see Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, *Amritsar, Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), pp. 141-91.

<sup>100</sup>According to official estimates, over 2,000 Sikhs were killed and some 10,000 rendered homeless in Delhi and its suburbs. See *Times Of India* (New Delhi), 21 November 1985.

<sup>101</sup>"People's Union for Democratic Rights and People's Union for Civil Liberties "Who are the Guilty?" Report of a Joint Enquiry into the Causes and Impact of the Riots in Delhi from 31 October to 10 November, 1984 (Delhi: 1984), p. 1.

policy towards the militants.<sup>102</sup> Having gained a huge electoral victory, Rajiv Gandhi was willing to make political concessions in Punjab. He realised that a solution to the Sikh problem was not possible without a settlement with the Akalis. The Akalis also realised that continued radicalisation of Sikh politics would have disastrous consequences for the Sikh community in India. Moving away from communal politics, Sant Longowal, reinstated head of the Akali Dal in 1985, launched a peace offensive in the state. He reiterated the importance of Hindu-Sikh amity, condemned acts of violence by Sikh extremists, and repeatedly declared that the Akali Dal was not in favour of Khalistan.<sup>103</sup>

This accommodative spirit was reflected in the Rajiv-Longowal accord, signed between Rajiv Gandhi and the moderate Akali leader Sant Longowal in 1985.<sup>104</sup> Among other issues, the accord agreed to the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and the establishment of a commission to determine the territory that would in turn be transferred from Punjab to Haryana; the river water disputes were to be referred to an independent tribunal whose decision would be binding on both parties; and the portion on centre-state relations in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was to be referred to an independent commission which was to make recommendations to the central government.

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<sup>102</sup>The assault on the Golden Temple was recognised as a big mistake on the part of the central government even by the Congress leaders. A similar opinion was expressed in interviews with Harkrishan Singh Brar, chief minister of Punjab, on 2 November 1996; and Harcharan Singh Hero, acting president of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee on 6 November 1996.

<sup>103</sup>Yog Raj Sharma, *State Autonomy and National Integration: Identity Crisis of the Sikhs* (Jammu: Vinod Publishers and Distributors, 1992), p. 105.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

Despite stiff resistance from some extremist Akali factions and leaders like the former chief minister, Prakash Singh Badal and the leader of the SGPC, G.S. Tohra, the accord constituted the first step towards restoring normalcy in the state. It also laid the basis for Akali victory in the coming elections.<sup>105</sup> However, the fact that the demand for Chandigarh was still linked to Abohar and Fazilka, made the whole exercise futile. The accord could not be successfully implemented. The centre appointed three commissions to examine the issue but could not work a satisfactory solution to suit both Haryana and Punjab.<sup>106</sup>

According to Hamish Telford,

the Punjab crisis should have ended at this point, but the failure of Rajeev Gandhi's government to implement the accord undermined the legitimacy of the Barnala ministry and directly contributed to the revival of the militant movement which was soon suffering from acute factionalism.<sup>107</sup>

Within weeks of the accord, Longowal was killed by extremist elements who thought he had sold out to the government. The successor government of S.S. Barnala, which came to power in 1985, tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the centre and the extremist factions, and was ultimately dismissed on 11 May 1987.

### *Political Impasse and use of force*

The Barnala government stood discredited in the eyes of the people for its failure to extract any concessions from the central government

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<sup>105</sup>The Akali Dal secured an overwhelming victory and an absolute majority in the Punjab legislature for the first time in its history. In addition they also won 7 out of 19 seats from Punjab. For details see S. Mustafa, "How the Akalis Fashioned Their Victory," *The Telegraph* 29 September, 1985, p. 21.

<sup>106</sup>For details on why the negotiations on Chandigarh and Abohar and Fazilka failed see Yog Raj Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-123. Also see Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent, India's Growing Crisis of Governability*, *op. cit.*, pp. 364-77.

<sup>107</sup>Hamish Telford, "The Political Economy of Punjab, Creating Space for Sikh Militancy", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, no. 11, November 1992, p. 985.

on the core issue of Chandigarh or settlement of the river water disputes. The dismissal of the Barnala ministry revived militancy in the state. No political solution seemed to be in sight. In the event, both the Congress and the Akali parties accused each other of aiding and abetting terrorism. Criticising the Akali party, the White Paper brought out by the Government of India stated that

Not only did the Akali Dal not disapprove the merciless killings of those who did not agree with the objectives and the methods of murder, arson and loot, it persistently refused to acknowledge the close connection between its agitational programme and the violence which was enveloping the state.<sup>108</sup>

It added that despite their claims of Hindu-Sikh amity, the Akali Dal did not denounce the poisonous propaganda of communal fanatics. Misuse of the Golden Temple and other shrines for the accumulation of large quantities of arms and ammunition, shelter for criminals, and other insurgent activities was not even acknowledged by the Akali Dal.<sup>109</sup>

The Congress, however, was not devoid of blame. According to Ved Marwah, additional commissioner of police, Delhi, "it's not the acts of terrorism, but the panic response of the Government of India that achieved for the terrorists their aim of destabilising the political system."<sup>110</sup> The Congress government at the centre adopted short-sighted policies to cover its own tracks. The fact that the Barnala government was dismissed on the eve of the election to the Haryana assembly, and president's rule promulgated on 11 May 1987, was not lost on the Sikhs. The timing of the dismissal stirred doubts about the centre's intentions and its desire to placate the Hindus in Haryana.

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<sup>108</sup>White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>110</sup>Ved Marwah, *Pathology of Terrorism in India* (New Delhi: INDUS, 1995), p. 169.

*Revival of force and terror tactics*

With no political solution in sight, the centre resorted to a series of military operations to curb militancy in the state. Operation Woodrose was launched between 1986 and 1987. The centre adopted a firm approach towards the militants. The situation was, however, deteriorating rapidly with a number of anti-social elements joining the militants. Even the moderate Akali leaders had renewed their parleys with the extremists and at the United Akali Dal (UAD) convention on 27 December 1987 a resolution put forward by the militants was forwarded unopposed by senior members of the UAD. In 1988, some militants regrouped again in the Golden Temple and the central government launched another operation, called Operation Black Thunder, to free the temple of the terrorists.

Unlike Operation Blue Star, which was poorly planned and executed, Operation Black Thunder (9-18 May 1988), was carried out with precision and knowledge. The strategy was to pin down the militants in their hiding places inside the complex by accurate long distance sniper fire, and then step-by-step advance towards the temple by first occupying strategic places. According to one source, the whole operation was planned by the National Security Guard (NSG), though help was forthcoming from the army, the air force (who helped take aerial photographs of the temple), and the Punjab police (who were in charge of briefing the media).<sup>111</sup> Every inch of the complex was mapped in order to gain entry into the temple without having to mount a frontal attack.

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<sup>111</sup>Ved Marwah, *op. cit.*, p. 191. For a detailed account of the operation, see pp. 188-205.



The degree of success of the operation is debatable, but the surrender of the militants resulted in a lack of public credibility for the terrorists as a whole. According to Ved Marwah,

the operation was a success in that all the hard core militants holed up in the Golden Temple were captured or killed; no damage was done to the temple; and not a single devotee who happened to be inside the temple was harmed.<sup>112</sup>

However, the fact that Operation Black Thunder was not followed up with any concrete action by the government made one observer comment that "Localised successes like Operation Black Thunder could never become synchronised to political initiatives which may have resolved the situation."<sup>113</sup>

#### *Worsening situation*

Meanwhile, political initiatives under the V.P Singh and Chandrashekhar governments did little to change the Punjab situation. Talks between Chandrashekhar and Simranjit Singh Mann, a former police officer heading the United Akali Dal, held much promise but Mann's insistence on the right of self-determination of the Sikhs led to the rupture of the talks.<sup>114</sup> The atmosphere was favourably inclined towards the militants after the general elections of 1989 brought to power extremist leaders such as Simranjit Singh Mann, Attinder Pal Singh (leader of the Khalistan Liberation Organisation); and Bimal Khalsa (the widow of the assassin of Indira Gandhi). Emboldened by the election results, the militants issued

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<sup>112</sup>Ved Marwah, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>113</sup>Manoj Joshi, "Combating Terrorism in Punjab, Indian Democracy in Crisis," *Conflict Studies*, no. 261, May 1993, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup>For details see Dharam Singh Sahota *Sikh Struggle for Autonomy (1940-92)* (Gardhiwala: Guru Nanak Study Centre, 1993), pp. 166-67.

diktats demanding conformity with a new set of rules which forbade the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, and meat at weddings; banned skirts and insisted that school uniforms be in particular colours of religious significance; and stressed the promotion of the Punjabi language.<sup>115</sup>

The militants increased their activities, especially during the night, using more sophisticated devices, and anti tank and land mines. By 1988, RPG -7 rockets had replaced .455 pistols and AK-47s.<sup>116</sup> The years 1990 and 1991 were the worst in Punjab. The death toll during this period was more than 6,000, a figure which exceeded the death toll of 5,521 during the whole period from 1981-89.<sup>117</sup> Police officers and government officials were being made targets and random killings were on the rise.<sup>118</sup> The terrorists had also extended their activities to the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

To ease the situation, the army was called out again in December 1990 under Operation Rakshak I to patrol the border areas of Ferozepur, Amritsar and Gurdaspur and assist the police and paramilitary in carrying out anti-terrorist operations. But police morale was low, and the numerous changes of government at the centre complicated the situation.<sup>119</sup> By the end of 1991, the army withdrew from Punjab and

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<sup>115</sup>Harinder Baweja, "Living by the Gun," *Seminar*, 39, October 1992, p. 31.

<sup>116</sup>Manoj Joshi, op. cit, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> For statistics of killings in 1981-91, see Ved Marwah, "Cop-ping Out?" *Seminar*, 398, October 1992, p. 33.

<sup>119</sup>Three governors, namely N.K. Mukarji, Virendra Verma, and Retd. General Malhotra succeeded each other between December 1989 and the end of 1990, sending conflicting signals to the police forces. N.K Mukherjee, a soft line advocate, was critical of the hard-line policy of the state and declared that if Sikh extremists had become terrorists, the state had become counter-terrorist with little respect for law or human rights. For details, see Nirmal Mukarji, "Problem or Opportunity?" *Seminar*, 398, October 1992, pp. 14-17.

police operations came to a virtual standstill. Extortion and kidnapping were rampant and there was a surge in trans-border movement. Recruitment to terrorist ranks went up and the entire state was running according to the demands of the militants.

The extremists had seized the initiative from the police. The Akali parties had boycotted the elections and joined hands with other militant organisations under a newly formed Shrimoni Panthic Action Committee comprising Kartar Singh Narang of the Babbar Akali Dal, Prakash Singh Badal, Baba Joginder Singh, father of Bhindrawale, and Manjit Singh of the All India Sikh Student Federation (AISSF). With the Akalis under their wing, the militants launched an offensive against the Congress government. They initiated a campaign of boycott and coercion to disrupt the functioning of the government. A directive issued to the Punjab bureaucracy by the militants warned officials not to implement government orders. No bureaucrat was to take part in implementing the Sutlej-Yamuna link canal project, which would provide Sutlej waters to Haryana; any officials who participated in national functions would have their legs chopped off. Finally, the circular demanded that all government transactions be carried out in Punjabi.<sup>120</sup> Subsequently, various government officials like the state excise commissioner, union agricultural commission chief and All India radio engineer were killed to convey the message of the militants.

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<sup>120</sup>*Frontline*, 28 March-10 April 1992, p. 121.

*Back to normalcy, role of the police*

The victory of the Congress party was the most important development in the Punjab situation and a decisive factor in central government calculations. When the elections of 1991 were cancelled and rescheduled for 1992, most parties boycotted them. Under the circumstances, the Congress secured a three-fourths majority with just 9 percent of the votes. With this victory, it set about the task of containing militancy in a very determined manner. For this it was willing to employ the help of the police, army, and para-military forces.

K.P.S. Gill, the police commissioner, known for his aggressive tactics, was put in charge of operations. Adopting a "bullet for a bullet" approach, Gill is reported to have stated:

since the militants had written the rules of the game, it was only fitting that the police played them as well. You shoot at us we shoot at you. And then you have one option: surrender or die. He turned a deaf ear to the allegations of excesses saying that the police had its own system of checks and balances.<sup>121</sup>

His strength lay in the novel strategies he employed to counter the militants. The strength of the Punjab police went up from 35,000 to 60,000 during Gill's time. He gave discreet awards to deserving candidates from a secret, unaudited intelligence-gathering fund, which ran into hundreds of millions of rupees. Operation Night Dominance was yet another strategy he used to tackle his opponents: all the senior officers patrolled during the night operations, setting a rare precedent in the history of the police force. Some villagers, for example in Jullunder district, were also provided with arms to protect

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<sup>121</sup>*India Today*, 1-15 April 1993, p. 65.

themselves from militants.<sup>122</sup> According to Gill, the central government was also providing funds to the police force. Rs. 85 crore was given to the force under the 1988-89 finance commission to procure more self-loading rifles.<sup>123</sup> The combined effect of these measures was to instil confidence among the police force and the people at large.

### *The role of the army*

The stern measures employed by Gill were supported by the army, which provided invaluable help to the Punjab police. After the debacle of Operation Blue Star, the army stayed away from the state from 1985 to 1990. In 1990, and under Operation Rakshak I, the role of the army was limited to border areas but in 1992 it came back under Rakshak II and provided almost 120,000 of its personnel for the operation. Its main tasks were: to assist in preventing trans-border movement of terrorists and arms; to aid civil authorities in anti-terrorist operations: to create a sense of security among local people; and to create conditions for a free and fair election. The army was deployed in the rural areas and gained dominance by aggressive patrolling, especially during the night. It provided manpower for the police cordon and search operations, and, when required, firepower. It was involved in a major retraining program for the police and paramilitary forces in operational tactics. The Punjab police was overhauled and two new commando battalions, equipped with AK-47 rifles, were set up under the guidance of the army.

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<sup>122</sup> Personal interview by the author with K.P. S. Gill in New Delhi, 28th May 1998.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

According to the Police Chief, K.P.S. Gill, the police would not have been able to achieve what they did without the help of the army. "The army came in earlier too but this time our coordination was total. Now, we carried out the raids while the army formed the outer cordon."<sup>124</sup> Another important feature of the army-police partnership was that the army was able to calm the prevailing feeling of fear which had begun to affect the police force. The common people were now coming forward to give information on the whereabouts of the militants.

#### *The turnaround*

The success of Gill brought in its wake complaints of brutal excesses and tortures, but militancy was effectively eliminated from the state. The policy of "shoot to kill" had been successful in eliminating the militants.

The year 1992 was the watershed in the fight against the militants. According to Gill, "by September 1992 the strike rate was below 100; by December 1992 less than 50 and for 1993 as low as 8-10."<sup>125</sup> The state had gained a decisive advantage over them through the intervention of the army and the police. The militants began to lose courage and some began indulging in depredation and debauched activities. The turning point, according to Gill, came with the killing of Manochahal and Kauli, both notorious militants.<sup>126</sup> According to another source, the major breakthrough came with the elimination of the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) chief, Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala, Sukhdev

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<sup>124</sup>*India Today*, 15 April 1993.

<sup>125</sup>Interview with K.P.S. Gill in New Delhi, 28 May 1998.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*

Singh Dasuwal, the legendary chief of the Babbar Khalsa, and Talwinder Singh Parmar, of the Babbar Khalsa International, who was behind the fund-raising operations of the Babbar Khalsa International and a link with the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence.<sup>127</sup>

*Why did the movement fail:?*

Both the use of force and conciliatory strategies had a major bearing on the Punjab crisis. The Rajiv Longowal accord generated some hope amongst the Sikhs, coming as it were in the aftermath of the desecration of the Golden Temple. However, the death of the moderate leader Longowal, and the difficulties associated with the implementation of the accord, made force a more sought after alternative. Many factors were responsible for the failure of the Khalistan movement. First, the effective co-ordination of the police and army operations was a major factor in quelling militancy in the state. The combined might of the state proved too strong for the Khalistan movement to strike its roots in Indian soil. The militants, despite their organisation and Panthic committees, were hardly a match for the Indian state which had at its disposal 53,000 Punjab police officers, 28,000 home guards, 10,000 special police officers and 70,000 paramilitary personnel at the time of the peak deployment in February 1992.<sup>128</sup>

Second, excesses in the form of murder, rape, and extortion had disillusioned the common people who were turning away from the militants fighting in the name of Khalistan. The veneer of religion

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<sup>127</sup>*Frontline*, 7-20 November 1992, pp. 26-27.

<sup>128</sup>*Frontline*, 29 February-13 March 1992, p. 125.

wore thinner and thinner between 1986 and 1989 when the terrorists began to target civilians irrespective of their faith or denomination. Moreover, an element of criminalisation had entered into the movement which many recruits were joining purely for the lure of money. According to Prakash Singh,

The Sikh movement reached its crescendo during Bhindrawale's time but it began to taper off because terrorism became a commercial enterprise, an industry or a short cut to employment.<sup>129</sup>

The people, tired of the disruption and the continuing violence, longed for peace and normalcy to return to the state.

Third, the induction of the Congress government in 1992 played a vital role in transforming the situation in Punjab. The Congress government was committed to wiping out militancy from the state. Its installation opened the doors of communication between the Punjab state officials and the bureaucracy. Moreover, because it was the same party at the centre and the state, the task of coordination became simpler and more effective.

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<sup>129</sup>Interview with Prakash Singh, Inspector General of Police, Border Security Force Punjab (1987-91), in New Delhi on 1 June 1998. For elaboration of the same point see Gurpreet Singh, *Terrorism - Punjab's Recurring Nightmare* (New Delhi: Sehgal Book Distributors, 1996), pp. 63-74.



According to Manoj Joshi,

Had any Akali Faction come to power... it would have come under immediate and intense pressure, ideological or otherwise, to ease off the battle against the militants, release detainees, transfer police officials and so on. National Opposition groupings had also shown between 1990 and 1992 that they suffered from the illusion that they could negotiate with the militants without crushing terrorist violence.<sup>130</sup>

#### *Future of the movement*

Most people are of the view that militancy has been wiped out from the state and will not resurface in the near future.<sup>131</sup> While it is difficult to make a definite statement, it does appear that the movement has petered out. A number of factors feed into a movement: organisation and leadership, external support, popular opinion, and the responses of the state and federal governments. To rebuild any of these would require considerable effort and energy. In the Khalistan case, the combined onslaught of the army and the police dealt a heavy blow to the movement, striking at its very base and its leadership and organisation capabilities. Nearly 6,000 terrorists died between 1981 and 1992 and around 20,000 were arrested. Moreover, with little support forthcoming from outside powers, and the distancing of the masses from the separatist cause, it will be difficult for the movement to regain its former stature.

However, this is not to suggest that the grievances of the Sikhs have been appropriately addressed. Politically, prospects for Akali-centre co-operation depend on New Delhi's willingness to decentralise power and let state politics regain their efficacy. Economically, a

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<sup>130</sup>Manoj Joshi, "Combating Terrorism in Punjab," op. cit, p. 19.

<sup>131</sup>Interviews with K.P.S. Gill, S.S Barnala and other academics at the Centre for Rural and Industrial Research (CRRID), Chandigarh.

prescriptive solution points to the need to decentralise and liberalise development planning and policy implementation to provide jobs for Punjab's educated unemployed, and investment opportunities for prosperous Punjabi farmers.

### *Conclusion*

As argued earlier, the nature of the state in South Asia, which bestows enormous powers on the centre, makes the realisation of secessionist ambitions almost impossible. India and Pakistan have deployed a wide range of strategies to deal with their ethnic communities. To the extent that the demands and aspirations of the respective groups have been accommodated and contained through open, democratic and competitive processes, the ethnic threat has somewhat receded. However, when demands have become aggressive and degenerated into secessionist conflicts which challenge the integrity of the nation state, both states have moved away from appeasement to force and repression.

This has been well illustrated in the case of the Baluch, where the five-year civil war against the Pakistani state (1973-77) was both a cause and result of the authoritarian and repressive measures of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Under Zia ul Haq a more conciliatory approach was adopted to deal with the Baluch. He placed more emphasis on the co-optation of the tribal sardars, and declared general amnesty for all the Baluch guerrillas involved in the 1973-77 insurgency, along with rehabilitation schemes to win their support.

In the case of the Sikhs a similar approach was followed. The initial sense of political security enabled Rajeev Gandhi to enter into an accord with the Akalis; the resumption of political dialogue received broad support but the failure to implement the provisions of the accord and to bring to trial those guilty of anti Sikh riots of 1984 made it difficult for the Akalis and the Congress to reach any sort of a political rapprochement. With no political solution in sight, and militancy on the rise, the government devised its own counter-militant strategy to contain the dissident groups.

The strategies pursued by the Indian state were more meticulously planned and executed than the Pakistani governments strategies *vis-a-vis* the Baluch but in both cases these resulted in the decline of the movements. But there is no denying the fact that as long as the basic grievances remain, the antagonisms will persist. The use of force offers temporary respite but does little to tackle the issue of self-determination or autonomy in the long run. This tussle between the centre and states will continue unless effective strategies are devised to<sup>9</sup> give more economic and political power to the federating units in both India and Pakistan. Having discussed the strategies of the state we will now examine the role of external intervention in the Baluch and the Sikhs quest for a separate state.

## Chapter 5

### EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF THE BALUCH MOVEMENT IN PAKISTAN AND THE KHALISTAN MOVEMENT IN INDIA.

Outside intervention is not unusual for states involved in ethnic conflicts. This is particularly in the case where secessionist movements seek recognition as a sovereign member of the community of states. Secession is difficult to achieve without outside support, since the might of the state is usually greater than that of the separatist groups. Intervention by an outside power can provide both moral and material help to warring groups. Challenges to the state can be sustained by foreign states, international organisations, or members of the ethnic group living overseas, either out of ethnic, cultural or religious solidarity or to serve self-interested political ends. External powers may mediate between conflicting groups, but more often intervention by a third power helps to perpetuate conflict.

External support was an important factor in sustaining the separatist movements in both Punjab and Baluchistan. This chapter looks at how external intervention encouraged separatist ambitions but how, paradoxically, the failure of the external powers to meet the expectations of the ethnic groups also led to the decline of the movements. The main argument advanced here is that though an independent Khalistan or an independent or Greater Baluchistan may have been unlikely from the very outset, lack of timely support from

external powers made the realisation of these goals even more difficult.

Foreign intervention may be defined as any action, military or non-military, direct or indirect, taken by an actor in the international system (a state, group of states, international, or regional organisation) *vis-a-vis* the target state with the objective of changing its (the target state) policy outputs, extracting political concessions against its will, and altering or reinforcing its political authority pattern.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, the end of the Cold War and concerns over human rights have made outside intervention more acceptable in international politics.

In some ways, the Cold War worked as a deterrent to powers seeking to intervene in domestic conflicts and restrained much ethnic and separatist activism. During the Cold War period, the principle of self-determination was reserved for colonial people fighting against foreign rule; but with the end of the Cold War came movements based on parochial ethnic identities which threatened to break away from the parent states. But though claims to self-determination have increased since the end of the Cold War they have not necessarily been created by it.<sup>2</sup> The break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have in some ways reopened the question of self-determination and brought it to the centre of domestic and international politics.

Another factor which has been invoked to justify the involvement of other powers in ethnic conflicts or wars of secession is that of human

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<sup>1</sup>Hasan Askari Rizvi, "External Intervention," *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 34, no. 2, 1981, pp. 64.'

<sup>2</sup>Kamal S. Shehadi, *Ethnic Self-determination and the Break-up of States*, Adelphi Paper 283, December 1993, p. 4.

rights violations and suffering caused by war. For example, the US-led intervention in Somalia in December 1992 sought to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations. The United Nations, in particular, has played a significant role in this regard.<sup>3</sup> In 1992, the United Nations launched a major peace-keeping operation in former Yugoslavia to help in the peace negotiations between the Serbs, Croats and the Muslims.

#### *Causes of external intervention*

There is no denying the fact that while domestic factors trigger crises and create conditions for the rise and growth of separatism, external forces can sustain and prolong the life of irredentist movements. According to Ralph Premdas, "the typology of domestic ethnic conflicts which have become international emphasises the mode of linkage between the external and internal environment."<sup>4</sup> Both external and internal factors interact with one another to provide an opportunity for external intervention.

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<sup>3</sup>For the UN role in peacekeeping see Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer (eds), *A Crisis of Expectations: UN Peacekeeping in the 1990s* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>See Ralph R. Premdas, "The Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict: Some Theoretical Explorations," in K.M. de Silva and R.J. May (eds), *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), pp. 12-14.

According to Donald Horowitz,

whether and when a secessionist movement emerges is determined by domestic politics but whether it will achieve its aims is determined largely by international politics, by the balance of interests and forces that extend beyond the state.<sup>5</sup>

International relations play a prominent role in explaining the outcome of secessionist movements, including why so few succeed. The external allies provide the warring ethnic groups with both material and moral support in the form of finance, weaponry, training, and providing a safe haven for the insurgents.

The involvement of external powers in the spread of ethnic conflicts is contingent on a variety of factors: the dispersal of members of the ethnic group to other countries; the geo-strategic location of the country; the ideological identification of any of the ethnic groups with a major international or regional power; the presence of international organisations with a responsibility for humanitarian concerns; and the organisational and communications capabilities of the adversaries.<sup>6</sup> External interventions may be divided, accordingly, into protective, defensive, opportunistic and humanitarian interventions.

Generally, ethnic sympathy for kith and kin is a compelling reason for a country to intervene on behalf of a group fighting for self-determination in another country. India's support for the Tamils in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is an indication of this. Interventions under this pretext are designed to offer security and assist common

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<sup>5</sup>Donald. L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 230.

<sup>6</sup>Premdas, *op. cit.*, p.16. Also see Stephan Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (England: Dartmouth Publishing Company Ltd, 1990), pp. 23-49.

ethnic groups found within the borders of other states. Ethnic nationalism finds a powerful expression both among followers at home and among those who reside outside; depending on the stimuli they receive from their homeland, the diasporic communities can be a pillar of support, both moral and material, to their counterparts in the home states. Thus Sikh communities in Britain and Canada support the struggle of the Sikhs in the Punjab. The diasporic groups can also influence public opinion in their home countries to focus international attention on the plight of their ethnic brethren involved in hostilities elsewhere.

Sometimes actions are preventive, to check cross-border problems such as the movement of refugees, or to keep wars from spreading into another country's territories. For instance, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 to neutralise Palestinian forces operating from there. The involvement of India in the Sri Lankan crisis was noted earlier. Such interventions are deemed defensive interventions and are designed to contain or check the effects of war.

Geo-strategic factors, political interests, and concerns about national security and regional stability are yet another set of factors prompting intervention by a third country. These can be broadly termed "opportunistic interventions". Guyana is a case in point; there the conflict between the ethnic Africans and the ethnic Indians was kept alive during the Cold War years by the United States and the Soviet Union to protect their respective spheres of influence. At times, the intervening power pursues a clear national interest, as in the case of Bangladesh in 1971, where India's interest was to weaken Pakistan, or



in Lebanon, where Syria had long term geo-strategic interests and stakes in regional stability.

During the Cold War years, ideological affinity between an ethnic community and an international power also influenced alliance patterns between them. In a world divided between capitalist and socialist camps, with high military and security stakes, the ideological-ethnic groups often turned to one of the superpowers for help. The response of super powers depended largely on strategic considerations. For example, the three main leaders of the Baluch national movement, Khair Bux Marri, Ataullah Mengal and Ghaus Bux Bizenjo, were deeply influenced by Marxist ideology, and this affiliation drew them closer to the Soviet Union.

Finally, humanitarian interventions have become more common in recent years, owing to increased global concerns about militancy, state repression and human rights abuses. Such interventions are aimed at relieving distress and restoring regional peace and security. The broad objectives of such interventions include, cessation of military hostilities, facilitation of political reconstruction (helping governments to establish themselves); economic recovery and development in areas that are torn by ethnic conflict; and issues such as rehabilitation of refugees, provision of food and other relief operations. Examples of such interventions include efforts made by leaders of Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela to bring peace in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua in the 1980s and

1990s. Peace-keeping operations under the aegis of the United Nations have also had some success in achieving humanitarian goals.<sup>7</sup>

Despite their moral justification, it may be pointed out that even humanitarian interventions are not entirely altruistic and could also arise out of a desire to contain war in neighbouring states lest it affects a country's own territory. Intervention in ethnic strife may succeed when the goals are geo-strategic or when the objectives are to provide humanitarian assistance, though what does not succeed is a combination of the two, since the two require different operations requiring different levels of commitment, different military deployments, and different rules of engagement.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Consequences of external intervention*

Internationalisation of ethnic conflict can modify the outcomes of conflict but its impacts may be complex. First, there is a circularity involved in securing foreign support. According to Donald L. Horowitz, a movement may require outside help to grow in strength, but no foreign state will risk committing itself to a movement that appears weak, and the very strength that attracts foreign support is hard to build without foreign support to begin with.<sup>9</sup>

Second, partisan intervention by external states seldom translates into military intervention. Secession - a common goal of some ethnic movements - does not conform to the prevailing political and legal

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<sup>7</sup>Robert Cooper and Mats Berdal, "Outside Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts," in Michael E. Brown (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 198-200

<sup>8</sup>Robert Cooper and Mats Berdal, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

<sup>9</sup>Donald L. Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

norms that govern the international system and its membership. The inter-state system as it has evolved since the Second World War is essentially a conservative order which generally seeks to uphold the interests of its composite entities and recognised governments. The UN General Assembly resolution 1514 categorically denies the right to self-determination where it may bring about the "partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country."<sup>10</sup>

The right to self-determination is regarded rather as guaranteeing, within a state, the protection of minorities and their right to democratic governance. It does not automatically entitle people to fight against a regime in pursuit of their political rights, or socio-economic and cultural development. Thus those intervening tend to be restrained by the international norm of state sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states. At the same time, the duration and scope of the militant involvement, problems of recruitment, attrition, morale and motivation, and lack of funds and capability also act as deterrents. Reactions from the international community, domestic political compulsions (negative public opinion) and fear of negative economic side-effects may also play an inhibitory role.<sup>11</sup>

Third, the extension of tangible military support, which in itself is usually inadequate and unreliable in the ultimate analysis (as in the case of Afghanistan's support for the Baluch secessionists), does not

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<sup>10</sup>Cited in Tarcisio Gazzini Padua, "Considerations on the Conflict in Chechnya," *Human Rights Law Journal*, Vol. 17, nos. 3-6, October 1996, p. 95.

<sup>11</sup>For details see Rajat Ganguly, "The Consequences of Partisan Intervention in Secessionist Wars: Lessons from South Asia," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1997, pp. 5-26.

necessarily translate into political-diplomatic support for separatist demands.

Fourth, even if secessionists succeed in obtaining support, such support usually encourages the state from which they are attempting to secede to adopt more repressive measures, leading to an erosion of the movement. In this, the state is backed by the norms set by the international community. According to Weiner, a secessionist's attempt to obtain external military help brings upon the peoples the power of the state and an enormous amount of suffering since governments usually respond to secessionist efforts by the repressive, and often brutal, use of armed power.<sup>12</sup> The external support for the Kashmir crisis has met fierce resistance from Indian authorities, leading them to take stronger measures to contain the Kashmiri militancy.

Fifth, intervention may invite counter-intervention by another power which is an ally of the state. For example Egypt's intervention in Yemen in 1967 was followed by a counter-intervention by Saudi Arabia leading to many years of civil war.

Finally, external support may, more often than not, lead to more violence and turn political conflicts into violent conflicts as third party support gives the weaker side the power to challenge the

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<sup>12</sup>Myron Weiner, "Peoples and States in a New Ethnic Order," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 13, no. 2, 1992, p. 326.

stronger.<sup>13</sup> It may also have negative effects on the prospects of political settlement between the warring parties. This was evident when India backed Bangladesh against West Pakistan in the 1971 war supplying guerrillas with arms and ammunition. Similarly when Serbia supported rebel Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia in the late 1980s, it helped create local Serb armies which made political compromise more difficult, and fighting more intense.

However, internationalisation of conflicts can at times have positive consequences. Heightened media attention may have a moderating effect on both parties, as neither wants its image to suffer in the eyes of other countries or international organisations. Another outcome, though less frequent, is conciliation; but that occurs only when the intervening parties are powerful enough to impose a solution or are seen as neutral actors without any bias. For example, Russia, Iran and the United Nations brokered a successful settlement in Tajikistan in 1997. When large regional or global powers get involved in a domestic ethnic dispute, the original issues may well be superseded by the interests of the external contenders, because external forces seldom enter the fray for altruistic purposes.

In the light of the above discussion, the following examines the role of external powers in the Baluch and the Khalistan movements and seeks to explain how external intervention affected the course of the respective movements during the years under study.

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<sup>13</sup>Alicia Levine, "Political Accommodation and the Prevention of Secessionist Violence," in Michael E. Brown (ed), *International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 328-29.

## **The Baluch**

The Baluch, whose numerical strength is highest in Baluchistan, are flanked by Afghanistan to their northwest, and Iran to their west. The province covers some 562 miles of the Persian Gulf's Makran coast, which includes the Strait of Hormuz. Given its strategic location, the area has always held a special significance for South Asia, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. The United States, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and to a lesser degree, Iran, Iraq and India have all been involved in the Baluch crisis in one way or another. This section discusses the role of each of these countries and examines how their interplay, in isolation or in tandem, influenced the Baluch insurgency in 1973.

### *The role of Afghanistan in the Baluch crisis*

The Baluch imbroglio was a product of two historical developments which had a profound impact on the subsequent unfolding of events. These were the drawing of the international borders which divided the Baluch community between three countries: Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan; and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 27 December 1979 which not only changed the geo-political complexion of the country but left an indelible impression on the future of Baluchistan.

The British, in a blatant display of divide-and-rule policy, drew the imperial boundaries of the subcontinent with a calculated disregard of ethnic and cultural identities. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Baluchistan was divided between Persia, Afghanistan, and British India, where the Baluch were divided between a directly administered colonial area, British Baluchistan, and the principality of Kalat. The imposition

of these boundaries created new states, but it did little to solve the dilemma of diasporic groups spread across Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, and the tangle of irredentist issues that followed. The Durand Line, the boundary drawn between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1893, has always been a bone of contention between the two countries, affecting both the Baluch and the Pushtun groups on either side of the border.

Afghanistan, for its own reasons, has never accepted the Durand line as an international boundary. It has maintained that it was imposed in 1893 at a moment of political disarray and was only a temporary boundary to delineate zones of influence for the maintenance of law and order.<sup>14</sup> The boundary remains contested. According to one view,

Irredentism is too deeply imbedded in Afghan minds for them to ever forget it; and though practical reasons may make the Afghan government shelve the question for a while, or the irredentism may lie dormant so long as Afghanistan's south-eastern neighbour is strong, it will always come to the surface when that neighbour is thought to be weak (as in 1919).<sup>15</sup>

In Afghanistan's frustrated attempts to unify the Pushtuns on both sides of the boundary lay the foundations for Pushtunistan. According to Robert Wirsing, there is no universally accepted definition of the Pushtunistan claim, but in its boldest formulation, it envisaged a totally independent Pushtun state.<sup>16</sup> It may be necessary to throw some light on the Pushtunistan question up to the late 1970s to understand Afghanistan's role and its relevance for the Baluch.

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<sup>14</sup>Selig Harrison, "Nightmare in Baluchistan," *Foreign Policy*, no. 32, Fall 1978 p. 145.

<sup>15</sup>Afghan-Pakistan Relations, No.7 (1041/58)DO 35 8930 *Public Records Office* (London) 24 January 1958.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Wirsing, *The Baluchis and Pathans*, Minority Rights Group Report no. 48 (London: Minority Rights Group, 1967), p. 15.

Afghanistan is a melting pot of different cultures. The Pushtuns form the largest group, numbering 6.5 million, followed by the Tajiks (3.5 million); Aimaqs (800,000); Farsiwan (600,000); Baluch and Brahuis (300,000); Turkmen (125,000) and Nuristanis (100,000). Apart from these groups, Gujars, Arabs, Jews, Punjabi Sikhs, Hindus and Parsis are also found in small numbers.<sup>17</sup> One of the factors shaping Afghan policy was the need to tip the demographic balance in favour of the Pushtuns, who constitute 40 percent of Afghanistan's population but fall short of a majority in the country. Another factor was that in economic and strategic terms "Greater Afghanistan" was a means of providing an outlet to the sea which would end the land-locked status of the country. It also gave Afghanistan an advantage over Pakistan.

Though the demand for Pushtunistan waxed and waned over several years, in response to both internal and external pressures, most Afghan governments extended their fullest support to the Pushtunistan movement.<sup>18</sup> Sardar Daud Khan, Prime Minister of Afghanistan during 1953-63 and then President of Afghanistan in 1973, until his assassination in the pro-Soviet communist coup of April 1978, was one of the chief proponents of the Pushtunistan movement. Apart from raising it in international forums, he felt that the people of Pushtunistan should be given the right to decide whether they wanted to join Afghanistan or Pakistan or become independent.<sup>19</sup> A clandestine radio station describing itself as "Radio

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<sup>17</sup>See Inayatullah Baluch, "Afghanistan-Pashtunistan-Baluchistan," *Aussen Politik*, Vol. 31, no. 3, 27 October 1980, p. 284.

<sup>18</sup>Babrak Kamal was a notable exception. He is believed to have stated that "the national issue of the Pushtun and Baluchi nationalities in Pakistan is entirely their own. If the Pushtuns, Baluchis or Sindhis are not satisfied with their regime, it is up to them to take any action." Quoted in *Kabul New Times* (Kabul), 20 February 1980.

<sup>19</sup>Chitra K. Tiwari, *Security in South Asia, Internal and External Dimensions* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), p. 91. After 1975, however, Daoud Khan was not as keen on the issue as before. He visited Pakistan in 1975 and agreed to settle



Pushtunistan" came on the air on 19 July 1973 and two days later, a public rally was held in Kabul in support of the Afghan claim to the Pushtun areas in Pakistan.<sup>20</sup>

*The Pushtunistan question and its bearing on the Baluch.*

While the unwavering support for Pashtunistan in Afghanistan can hardly be disputed, what was never made clear was the position of the Baluch in this arrangement. Afghanistan has time and again expressed a desire to unify the Pushtun tribes on both sides of the border and even claimed rights in NWFP up to the Indus river and to the south in Baluchistan up to the Makran coast including the port of Karachi. According to another source, Pushtunistan was meant to cover territory that extended from Chitral in the north, bordering China, to the Arabian sea in the south, covering NWFP, Baluchistan, the free tribal territories like Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan and parts of the districts of Mianwali and Multan in Pakistan Punjab.<sup>21</sup>

Although Afghanistan has traditionally encouraged Baluch ambitions for some form of liberation from Islamabad, it has never favoured an independent Baluch state. It offered arms and ammunition to the Baluch during the insurgency in 1973-77, and provided sanctuary to many leaders and organisations like the Baluch People's Liberation Front (BPLF) and Baluch Student Organisation (BSO). By the 1980s there were three major political organisations fighting for the Baluch

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the problem peacefully because he wanted to reduce his government's dependence on local communists and the Soviet Union.

<sup>20</sup>Zubeida Mustafa, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and Central Asian Politics (1973-78)," *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 31, no. 4, 1978, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup>*Patriot* (New Delhi), 14 September 1973.

cause in Baluchistan. The BPLF espoused a mix of Baluch nationalism and Marxist-Leninist thought which rejected the primacy of both Moscow and China; BSO was a student organisation at the forefront of the struggle in Baluchistan; the Pakistan National Party (PNP) was fighting for a confederation of states within Pakistan where each nationality would be given provincial autonomy within the Pakistan state.

Camps were reportedly set up in Afghanistan to train Baluch guerrillas and anti-government Pushtun activists. According to one report, Ajmal Khattak, the former secretary of NAP, who was based in Kabul, managed to develop his own network of 50 base camps in the border areas manned by 700 hard core militant followers.<sup>22</sup> The Afghan government also provided a few arms to the Baluch, not so much to give them a proper strength to fight but rather to prolong the conflict and thereby press Pakistan to give concessions to Afghanistan on the Pushtunistan issue.<sup>23</sup> During the Mohammad Daud regime, one of the leaders of the BPLF, Mir Hazar, stationed near Kandahar, claimed to have received a subvention of \$32 per person from successive Afghan governments totalling some \$ 875,000 per year in mid-1980.<sup>24</sup>

However, as mentioned earlier, the Afghans never favoured an independent Baluch state, preferring the ultimate incorporation of Baluchistan into a Greater Afghanistan or an Afghan-controlled

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<sup>22</sup>Zubeida Mustafa, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and Central Asian Politics," *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup>Janmahmad, *Essays in Baluch National Struggle in Pakistan - Emergence, Dimensions, Repercussions* (Quetta: Gosha-e- Adab, 1989), p. 389.

<sup>24</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow - Soviet Temptations and Baluch Nationalism* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), p. 81.

Pushtunistan. Afghanistan's 18th century founder, Ahmad Shah Durrani, ruled over the Baluch state of Kalat as a tributary for fourteen years. Kabul has since then always wanted to include Baluchistan in its expansionist claims to areas east of the Durand line.

This attitude had a major drawback in that it took the compliance of the Baluch for granted. The Baluch response to being part of a Greater Afghanistan or an Afghan-controlled Pushtunistan has never been positive. They have always espoused the cause of an independent Baluchistan or a confederation conferring more rights to them within Pakistan. What has, however, complicated matters is that the stated positions of the Baluch leaders and organisations have varied, at different times, reflecting little conformity of thought or approach. The three main parties espousing the cause of Baluch were divided in their ultimate demands. For example, the manifesto of the Liberation Front stressed that it was not fighting for the Baluch alone but the liberation of all nationalities in Pakistan and did not think that the struggle for "Greater Baluchistan" was feasible in the face of Iran's growing military power.<sup>25</sup> Bizenjo's Pakistan National Party (PNP), on the other hand, stood steadfastly for autonomy within Pakistan.

Not only have parties differed in their approach but prominent leaders have also frequently altered their statements. Ataullah Mengal, one of the main leaders of the Baluch movement who headed the first elected government of Baluchistan in 1972, changed his stand with the passage of time. In 1978 he was prepared to accept Bizenjo's idea of a loose federation with constitutional guarantees for the different nationalities, but in 1983 he declared that Baluch would

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<sup>25</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 78.

no longer pursue their quest for provincial autonomy within Pakistan but would now fight for complete independence from the Pakistani state.<sup>26</sup> Surprisingly, his definition of an independent state did not include the Baluch of Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>27</sup>

According to Donald. L. Horowitz,

a group that might otherwise be disposed to separatism will not be so disposed if its secession is likely to lead, not to independence, but to incorporation in a neighbouring state, membership in which is viewed as even less desirable than membership in the existing state.<sup>28</sup>

This is more true of ethnic groups such as the Baluch, whose members are spread across different countries.

The Baluch have over the years remained reluctant to share power with the Pushtuns. To the Baluch, any Pushtunistan which claims the Baluch area would be the worst threat to the Baluch national aspirations. According to the 1981 census (the figures for the latest census are not available), 57 percent of the population of the Pakistani province of Baluchistan are Baluch and 25 percent are Pushtuns.<sup>29</sup> By all reports, the Baluch have been steadily marginalised in their home province by the overwhelming presence of Pushtuns, whose numbers have grown rapidly since the Afghan crisis. This, as discussed in Chapter 3, has disturbed the demographic balance of Baluch versus Pushtuns in Baluchistan. It has also led to frequent clashes between the two ethnic groups over issues such as the allocation of resources,

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<sup>26</sup>See Lawrence Lifschultz, "Independent Baluchistan - Ataulah Mengal's Declaration of Independence," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual number, 18, 19, 20 May 1983, p. 735.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 751.

<sup>28</sup>Donald.L. Horowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>29</sup>Cited in Mehtab Ali Shah, *The Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Ethnic Impacts on Diplomacy, 1971-94* (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1997), p. 91.

jobs, ownership of coal mines, and business enterprises. Under these circumstances, there was little certainty of the Baluch agreeing to any arrangement, such as that envisaged under Greater Baluchistan, and playing a subservient role to the Pushtuns. The Baluch have resented being referred to as "Southern Baluchistan" or being part of Pushtun irredentism, and have blamed Pakistan for squandering many opportunities to resolve the Durand line issue .

*Pakistan's response to Afghanistan and the Pushtunistan question*

As stated earlier in the chapter, the Pushtunistan issue has bedevilled relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan since the withdrawal of the British from the Indian subcontinent in 1947. There has been a complete severance of relations between the two countries in 1955 and 1961; disruption of trade between and transit through both countries; and major outbreaks of armed violence involving tribal and/or regular forces, especially between 1950-51 and 1969-61.

Pakistan has recognised the Durand line as the international boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan and believes that any claim made by Afghanistan on Pushtuns or Baluch living on the Pakistan side of the Durand line is tantamount to interference in the internal affairs of the country. Pakistan feared that Afghan claims were thinly veiled irredentist attempts to annex Pakistani territory and obtain access to the sea. It believed that Afghanistan, itself is a plural society, was using the Pushtunistan issue to create a pan-Pushtun national consciousness to unify its various heterogeneous groups. Pakistan's insecurities were also fuelled by the fact that Kabul made no mention of including any Pushtu-speaking areas of

Afghanistan in a future Pushtunistan. Added to this, the fact that Pushtun leaders in Pakistan such as Abdul Ghaffar Khan had opposed the very creation of Pakistan was not lost on the Pakistani leadership.

Some normalcy was established between Afghanistan and Pakistan under the Tehran agreement of 29 May 1963 under which diplomatic relations were restored and trade was resumed between the two countries. In 1978, a joint committee was set up to facilitate closer ties between the two countries.<sup>30</sup> It was also reported, though not officially confirmed, that Sardar Daud and General Zia ul Haq concluded a diplomatic deal ruling out the continued use of Afghan territory by Baluch dissidents opposed to the Pakistan government.<sup>31</sup> Tensions, however, resurfaced when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Pakistan's non-recognition of the Soviet-installed regime in Afghanistan made Kabul continue its support to the Pushtun and Baluch insurgents by providing them with arms and ammunition in order to neutralise the presence of the US and Pakistani backed Afghan resistance groups, the Mujahideen, based in NWFP and Baluchistan.<sup>32</sup> By 1981, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the picture changed completely. Afghanistan was now itself in the throes of ethnic violence and was hardly in a position to support any insurgency outside its borders.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Dawn (Karachi), 9 March 1978.

<sup>31</sup>Selig Harrison, "Nightmare in Baluchistan," op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>32</sup>Chitra Tiwari, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>33</sup>For an updated account of the ethnic conflict in Afghanistan see Amin Saikal, "Afghanistan's Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 40, no. 2, Summer 1998, pp. 114-26.

*Soviet policy towards the Baluch*

For the Soviets, Baluchistan provided the shortest route to gain access to the Indian Ocean, which would enhance its ability to regulate trade flows vital to the US, Western Europe, Japan and Australia. As some scholars have argued, it would have also permitted the Soviet Union to control the supply of Gulf oil which constitutes 60 percent of the world reserves. The Makran coast, with the port facilities at Chabahar, Gwadar, Pasni and Karachi, could have provided firm bases for a Soviet fleet. A naval base on the Makran coast with a corridor to the erstwhile Soviet Union through Pakistani or Iranian Baluchistan would undoubtedly have been a tremendous asset for the Soviet Union, especially since sea traffic carried 80 percent of strategic raw material to West Europe. Moreover, a Russian presence in Baluchistan with base facilities on the Makran coast would have allowed the harnessing of natural resources which are abundant in Baluchistan.

Yet despite these strategic advantages, the Soviets showed little interest in aiding the separatist struggle in Baluchistan.<sup>34</sup> These advantages were in fact more imagined than real. Very little help was forthcoming from the Soviet Union in terms of arms and equipment during the 1973-77 Baluch insurgency. In the latter half of 1974, the Soviet Union, which had until then openly supported the Afghan rulers in their demand for Pushtunistan, became more cautious and circumspect.<sup>35</sup> This had a modifying effect on Afghanistan. The

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<sup>34</sup>See Henry. S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union* (Durham, NC: Duke Press Policy Studies, 1983), pp. 254-5.

<sup>35</sup>According to one source, the change in the Soviet's attitude was due to two factors; first, it came at a time when Moscow was seeking a *detente* with the West and an activist approach on the Pushtunistan question would have jeopardised its progress; and second, Sardar Daud who had been brought to power by a group of pro-Russian leftist army officers, had after establishing himself in power, eased some members

Kremlin prevailed upon Afghanistan to not support the Baluch secessionist movement beyond a point as it did not suit their long-term policy objectives. They dissuaded Afghanistan from actively training and offering sanctuary to the Baluch insurgents.

Although the Baluch looked to the Soviet Union for help and assistance, the USSR never extended full support for an Independent or Greater Baluchistan.<sup>36</sup> In the event, help came in a restricted and indirect way. For example, a new monthly magazine, *Soub* (victory in Baluchi) began publication on 20 September 1978 from Kabul; it sought to mobilise the Baluch of Iran and Pakistan. The Baluch nomads were granted lands in the Afghan part of Baluchistan to galvanise their counterparts in Iran and Pakistan.<sup>37</sup> However, while defining the Baluch as a separate nationality and upholding their right of secession, the Soviets steadfastly resisted any efforts for the actual realisation of their objectives: an Independent or Greater Baluchistan.

The Kremlin's equivocal stance was not without reason. According to one scholar, the Russians never wanted to compromise their relations with Iran or Pakistan for the sake of ideology.<sup>38</sup> The option of being able to win over the Pakistani federal governments was therefore

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from the revolutionary Council. In such a situation the Soviets were less inclined to support him or the Pushtunistan issue, which was the cornerstone of Sardar Daud's policy. See Zubeida Mustafa, "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and Central Asian Politics," op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>36</sup>The first map of Greater Baluchistan was prepared by Mir Abdul Aziz Khan Kurd, the first General Secretary and founder of the Baluch nationalist movement, Anjam-E-Ithad-E-Baluchistan. It claimed areas of Western Baluchistan in Iran, the Baluchistan states of Kalat and Lasbella as well as British Baluchistan, Derajat, and Sindh. Later the idea was espoused by the Baluch People's Liberation Front. See Inayatullah Baluch, "Afghanistan-Pashtunistan-Baluchistan," *Aussen Politik*, Vol. 31, no. 3, 27 October 1980, p. 300.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 300-301.

<sup>38</sup>Janmahmad, op. cit., p. 389.



always kept open. The Soviets were sympathetic to the minorities in Pakistan but were using them to gain leverage with respect to the Pakistani federal state which they saw as an ally of the West. The Soviets provided intellectual support and helped in the distribution of literature that could be used by the Baluch Students Organisation (BSO) and the Baluch People's Liberation Front (BPLF). They also created an infrastructure which could not identify them as being ranged against Pakistan but would at the same time signal that they were friends of the Baluch.<sup>39</sup>

According to Janmahmad, though the Soviet Union theoretically favoured the right of minority groups fighting against their governments, those who did not follow the communist ideology seldom received any material support.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the Soviets realised that Baluch aspirations for a separate state could have similar consequences for Afghanistan and its Baluch population. Afghanistan would never allow its area to secede and form part of a united Baluch state at the cost of its Pashtunistan ideal. Finally, the Soviets were aware of the fact that the tribal nature of the Baluch society would not lend itself easily to the propagation of the communist ideology.

*The role of other powers in the Baluch crisis.*

*Iran*

Iran has always considered Baluchistan to be of immense importance to its security and well-being, as any uprising in Eastern Baluchistan

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<sup>39</sup>Interview with Dr Robert Wirsing, University of South Carolina, Columbia on 3 June 1996.

<sup>40</sup>Janmahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

could pose a grave danger to Iran's own Baluch minority. In 1977, according to one estimate, out of a total population of 34,000,000, the Baluch numbered 600,000.<sup>41</sup> The Iranian Baluch were far less organised and looked towards their Pakistani counterparts for support. A number of reasons have been advanced for their passive demeanour.

According to a Baluch expatriate,

Iran has a unitary system in which all are Persians. No ethnic or religious differences are recognised and the government has time and again resorted, forcibly, to impose another culture on the Baluch and settle them in a way that they can never be a collective force against Tehran.<sup>42</sup>

This has generally contributed to the weakness of the Baluch movement in Iran. Iranian Baluchistan is divided into five distinct areas, which are not linked very well to one another, making it difficult for any Baluch leader to unite them into one political entity. The central authorities in Iran used force where necessary and at other times simply co-opted the Baluch Sardars to keep the Baluch areas under control. Under Mohammad Reza Shah, the Baluchi language was banned and Persian made compulsory in schools. Strict censorship laws were passed on the publication, distribution and even possession of Baluch literature; and wearing the traditional Baluch attire was proscribed in public places. A combined province of Sistan and Baluchistan was created to dilute the presence of the Baluch by lumping them in with the more Persianised group of Sistanis and by

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<sup>41</sup> See Patricia J. Higgins, "Minority-State Relations in Contemporary Iran," in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (eds.), *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 178.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with an Iranian Baluch requesting anonymity in Washinton D. C on 27 May 1996.

encouraging Persian settlers to move to the province and buy Baluch lands and businesses.<sup>43</sup>

This could not, however, prevent the Baluch uprisings of 1957-59 and 1969-1973. It was during the last decade of the Shah's regime (1969-79) that a policy of appeasement towards the Baluch was introduced by laying more emphasis on economic inducements to weaken the Baluch movement. Its foundations has already been laid in 1963 under what was hailed as the "White Revolution" which entailed distribution of land to poor peasants, and introduction of female emancipation, literacy, health and other social welfare programs. In 1973, the Baluchistan Development Corporation was created, and provisions were made for expenditures up to \$100 million in the Baluch areas during the ensuing five years.<sup>44</sup> Education also received a further boost under the influence of Jamshid Amouzegar, who served as prime minister (August 1977 to August 1978) and head of the governing Rastakhiz (Renascence) Party.

However, since a lot of Baluch were returning from jobs in the Persian Gulf and were becoming more conscious of their political rights, mere expansion of educational facilities did not win the Baluch support for Tehran. This was because, as with the Pakistani Baluch (although to a lesser extent) education was not accompanied by substantial political reform or economic development. According to one source, although the idea of a Greater Baluchistan, carved out of the Baluch areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, remained

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<sup>43</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

<sup>44</sup>For details see *ibid.*, p. 99.

generally attractive the Baluch movement continued to remain weak on the ground.<sup>45</sup>

Baluch nationalism, it may be argued, has never been a potent force in Iran, despite nationalist figures like Dad Shah and Jumma Khan. The latter made his debut in 1957 and rallied nationalist support in both the Pakistani and Iranian parts of Baluchistan by launching the Baluch Liberation Front. The Front received some support from Iraq, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Syria and Egypt, the last two allowing him to open offices. The Syrians even gave Jumma Khan quasi-diplomatic status during 1965 and 1966 as the representative of a provisional Baluchistan government-in-exile, but this did not survive for too long.

These developments did little, however, to allay the fears of the late Shah, who felt that the Iranian Baluch could still be inspired by their Pakistani counterparts.<sup>46</sup> The Iranian and Pakistani federal authorities shared the common goal of containing the Baluch uprising in Pakistan. As early as 1973, the Shah of Iran had publicly declared that what was happening in Pakistan

is vitally important to us and should another event befall that country, we would not be able to tolerate other changes or difficulties in Pakistan - we will not close our eyes to any secessionist movement - God forbid in your country.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, the dismissal of the NAP-JUI government, the first elected provincial government in Baluchistan's history, by Zulfikar Ali

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<sup>45</sup>Interview with an Iranian Baluch requesting anonymity in Washington D. C on 27 May 1996.

<sup>46</sup>Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nationbuilding in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989), p. 230.

<sup>47</sup>*Newsweek*, 14 November 1977, p. 70.

Bhutto in February 1973 was allegedly at the insistence of the Shah of Iran. The Shah, uneasy about the provincial government headed by the Baluch, would have been glad to see it go. The Shah's preparations for averting a possible crisis in Baluchistan included a joint two-week field training exercise held by the Iranian Special Forces Units and US Army Green Berets near CharBahar in March 1978.<sup>48</sup> This was followed by other steps including economic aid and provision of more arms and ammunition to Pakistan. A squadron of Iranian helicopters stationed in Quetta was used in Jhalawan and the Marri hills during 1975-76 when the civil war was going on in Pakistan. In fact, these AH-1J Huey-Cobra helicopters, some manned by Iranian pilots, joined the Pakistani air force raids and provided the key to victory in a crucial battle at Chamalang which killed some 17,000 guerrillas of the Marri tribe.<sup>49</sup>

#### *Arab support*

Arab support for the Baluch, on the other hand, was more muted. Most Arab states believed that the Baluch were ethnically of Arab origin and thus generally supported their cause. According to one source (Riyad Najib Al Rayyes), a commentator in the Saudi-backed Paris weekly *Al Mostakbal* (The Future), the establishment of a Baluch nation would not only secure political systems in the Gulf, but would enhance and strengthen the Arab presence in the Gulf area by protecting it from the continuous flow of immigration from India, Korea and other places.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>49</sup>Selig Harrison, *Nightmare in Baluchistan*, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>50</sup>Cited in Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 121.

He also declared that

the establishment of an Arab nation, with its Arab heritage and history, is more important than saving an already divided Islamic country ruled by military leaders and suffering from political instability, which makes it vulnerable to every threat from outside.<sup>51</sup>

However, like many other countries which supported the Baluch movement, the Arab states were also unwilling to take a decisive stand on the Baluch issue for fear of disturbing their relations with Pakistan, which was considered a friendly state.

#### *Iraq*

Iraq, on the other hand, had more compelling reasons to support the Baluch cause. The Shah was backing the Kurdish rebels who were opposed to the Baghdad government and Iraq saw this as a good opportunity to get back at Iran by siding with the Baluch who were natural allies of Iraq in their conflict with Iran. Baghdad became the headquarters for intensified radio broadcasting and insurgent activities in Iranian Baluchistan. However, lack of political consciousness and education, and a policy of co-opting the Sardars to serve as agents of the Iranian government, dealt a severe blow to the aspirations of the Baluch. The truce between Iran and Iraq in 1975 lessened the need for Iraq to foment the Baluch insurgency in Iran. By mid-1978, Iranian Baluch were therefore rendered leaderless, disorganised and politically quiet.

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<sup>51</sup>Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p. 121.

*The role of the US*

The role of the US in relation to the Baluch was more that of an adversary than a friend, as it was aligned with the Pakistani state and was providing Pakistan with arms to counter the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. From the Baluch perspective, the US-Pakistan special relationship was seen as the federal government's greatest weapon against them. This stemmed from their belief that the central authorities worked largely in the interests of the Punjabis, Pushtuns and Mohajirs. To the Baluch most of the policies of the federal government, whether the formation of the one-unit in 1955 or the military action against them in 1973, were supported and backed by the United States.<sup>52</sup>

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the US stepped up its supply of arms to Pakistan to help the Afghan Mujahideen who were fighting against the communist regime in Afghanistan. In 1982, the US gave Pakistan \$3,200 million in aid, half of which was earmarked for overhauling the Pakistan armed forces. Later in 1986 another \$4,600 million was given to the country.<sup>53</sup> There was, however, a greater fear of the Soviet Union crossing into Baluchistan and occupying the Gulf oilfields or the fishing harbours of Gwadar and Pasni. To check such an intrusion, it is believed that General Zia ul Haq, the then president of Pakistan, offered the US permission to open a naval base at Gwadar to monitor submarine and other naval movements in the Makran.<sup>54</sup> The role of the US in containing the

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<sup>52</sup>Mahtab Ali Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>53</sup>See Mahtab Ali Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 19. On US assistance to Pakistan from 1952 to 1981, see Devidas B. Lohalekar, *US Arms to Pakistan - A Study in Alliance Relations* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1991), p. 101.

<sup>54</sup>For details see Lawrence Lifschultz, *op. cit.*, p. 741.

Baluch insurgency was not direct but it helped indirectly to strengthen the Pakistan state in its fight against the Baluch.

### *India's role*

India's role in the Baluch crisis has been quite small, though the Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), reportedly maintained some contact with the Baluch movement. But according to one source, after the Bangladesh crisis, India refrained from meddling in the Baluch or Pushtun issue.<sup>55</sup> In Ataullah Mengal's view, India would not bear any grudge if Baluchistan became independent but would not play an important part in the process.<sup>56</sup> It is widely held in India that a weak and fragmented Pakistan is not in the long-term interest of India. It would only invite external attention in the region which India remains committed to keep at bay. This view is, of course, at great variance with that of Islamabad, which believes that India would go to any lengths to have leverage over Pakistan.

### *Viability of a greater and independent Baluchistan*

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the Baluch movement had important international dimensions. This has been so mainly because the Baluch are spread across three countries. With its strategic location Baluchistan has always been vulnerable, but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 brought far-reaching changes in the region and put Baluchistan in the limelight again. It brought out the

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Selig Harrison, 24 May 1996.

<sup>56</sup> Lawrence Lifschultz, *op. cit.*, p. 751.



conflict between the two superpowers, with the Baluch caught in between their own long-term strategic interests in the region. At the same time, the level of interest of the concerned countries in the Baluch movement has been substantially determined by both their domestic vulnerabilities as well as by their regional concerns. While domestic factors - such as lack of trust between the Baluch and successive Pakistani federal governments, low levels of socio-economic development, minimal political participation, and small numbers of the Baluch - made the viability of an independent Baluchistan suspect, international support for the Baluch movement remained generally low-key.

Broadly there were three factors which prevented large-scale support for the emergence of a Greater Baluchistan or an Independent Baluchistan. First, as explained earlier, Iran and Afghanistan were reluctant to extend support to the movement for fear of disturbing their own relations with Pakistan. At the same time, neither was willing to exacerbate its own internal insurgencies. The reluctance of the Soviet Union, to whom the Baluch leaders looked for help, to take any initiative, sealed the fate of the Baluch in the years to come. Thus, when the Afghanistan crisis ended, dreams of international support waned and the Baluch were left out in the cold. The Baluch would never have been able to secure independence on their own but might have done so under the aegis of an external ally willing to provide them with moral and material support.

Second, the Baluch diaspora was not united to press for a Greater Baluchistan. The Baluch in Pakistan were politically the most active, but in both Iran and Afghanistan, they were disorganised and

incapable of extending any support to the cause of Greater Baluchistan. Finally, the Pushtunistan question did not endear itself to the Baluch. Afghanistan wanted a Pushtunistan but the fate of the Baluch in the new state was at best ambiguous. The closing of the Pushtunistan option, reluctance of the Soviet Union to support the Baluch struggle, and the might of the Pakistani state combined with US and Iranian support made an Independent or Greater Baluchistan a non-viable proposition.

### **Punjab**

Like the Baluch, the Punjab crisis also had its external dimensions. This section seeks to examine the role of external powers in sustaining and strengthening the Khalistan movement. It also analyses how events in India had a direct impact on the the political behaviour of the Sikh community in other parts of the world and in turn, their contribution to the Sikh cause.

#### *Khalistan issue: Sikh diaspora*

Ethnic groups outside the country are easily affected by events in their homeland and ethnic nationalism can be mobilised in support of developments in regions that lie outside the home country. Living in distant lands and facing the pressure of maintaining their cultural identity, expatriate communities tend to be conservative and sometimes fanatical about preserving their beliefs. Many Sikhs in the diaspora are particularly proud of their distinguishing physical features including the 5 K's mentioned in Chapter 3. The Sikhs have by and large been very successful in forming their own local networks

and are a fairly prosperous community.<sup>57</sup> Events in Punjab might thus have been expected to have a strong effect on such a conscious, proud and successful people with strong diasporic relations in both the industrialised and the underdeveloped countries.<sup>58</sup>

The effects of the Punjab crisis were felt by the Sikhs in different parts of the world, especially in places where they are concentrated in large numbers such as the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, West Germany and Ecuador. In the aftermath of Operation Blue Star in 1984, shocked and outraged Sikh communities organised mass demonstrations in the UK and North America.

A steady stream of writing in the form of magazines and newspapers such as the *World Sikh News* (USA), *Desh Pardesh* and *Awaz-e-Quam* (UK), and the *Sikh Spectrum* (Canada), kept the issue of Khalistan alive. Extremist organisations such as the National Council of Khalistan (with Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan as president), and Babbar Khalsa International and Dal Khalsa led by Sukhdev Singh Babbar and Gajinder Singh respectively, flourished in different parts of the world, particularly in the US, Canada, Italy, Denmark, Holland, and the United Kingdom.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Places of worship hold a special significance for the people of subcontinental origin, being the focus of religious, political and social activities. In the case of the Sikhs, the *Gurudwaras* played a vital role in mobilising public opinion.

<sup>58</sup>There is a substantial literature on Sikhs in Punjab and on the diaspora. See Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, 2 vols (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1966); Gerald Barrier and Verne Dusenbery (eds), *The Sikh Diaspora* (Delhi: Chanakya Publishers, 1989); and Joseph O'Connell and Milton Israel (eds), *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre for South Asian Studies, 1988).

<sup>59</sup>*Times Of India* (New Delhi), 15 March 1992. For organisations in the UK see Shinder Thandi, "The Punjabi Diaspora in the UK and the Punjab Crisis," in Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds), *The Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1996), p. 235.

It may be observed that Indians constitute 31 percent of the British ethnic minority population and according to one source, there are about 300,000 Sikhs living in the urban areas of Britain.<sup>60</sup> The historical relationship between Britain and the Sikhs, and the sheer size of the Sikh population in the United Kingdom, combined to give Sikhs a very distinctive voice outside their homeland. Tension erupted between the Sikhs and Hindus residing overseas in 1984, undermining the sense of unity that existed within the Indian community.<sup>61</sup> Many underwent the *amrit pahull* ceremony (baptism) for the first time, to show their commitment to the Sikh *panth*.

Reports from relatives and friends in India on the torture of innocent Sikhs during the November 1984 riots magnified the pain of the expatriate Sikhs.<sup>62</sup> Growing evidence of state repression, human rights violations by the security forces,<sup>63</sup> and constant prevarication on the part of the Indian government over action against those responsible for the Sikh massacres in Delhi and other cities, made the Sikhs believe that they would be better off in a sovereign state independent of India.

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<sup>60</sup>Roger Ballard, "Differentiation and Disjunction among the Sikhs," in Roger Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain* (London: Christopher Hurst & Co, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> For example, allegations of the Indian High Commission distributing video films to Indians in Britain to present the official viewpoint of the Indian government, and of using its connections to collect information on all those Sikhs who were sympathetic to the Khalistan cause, created many differences between the Sikh and the Hindu population in Bristol. See Rohit Barot, "The Punjab Crisis and Bristol Indians," *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 2, 1995, p. 206.

<sup>62</sup>Observations made from interviews conducted during the course of my field work in London, where Sikhs had gathered for a meal (*langar*) at a Sikh temple in South Hall, London.

<sup>63</sup> See Amnesty International, *India: Human Rights Violations in Punjab: Use and Abuse of Law* (London, 1991); and Asia Watch, *Punjab in Crisis, Human Rights Watch* (Washington D.C, 1991).

The Sikh organisations outside were actively involved in collecting funds and organising training camps for the militants. In 1981 as many as 25 percent of Sikhs were living outside Punjab, and they were sending huge remittances to Punjab. Sikh militants were reported to have received training in schools in US and Canada, the latter serving as a safe haven for Sikhs escaping arrests and legal actions in India.<sup>64</sup> Extremist organisations were functioning abroad, with the support of some Sikh leaders who wanted a separte homeland for the Sikhs - Khalistan - in India. Prominent among them was Ganga Singh Dhillon, a US national who headed the Nankana Sahib Foundation, and declared the Sikhs to be a separate nation.

#### *Demand for Khalistan*

Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan, a former medical practitioner and finance minister of Punjab, put forth the demand for Khalistan for the first time in London in an interview in September 1971. Subsequently, a press note was issued in Jullandhur on 16 June 1980 with the proclamation of the Government of Khalistan before the Akal Takht at Amritsar, and a similar press release was issued in London naming Dr Jagjit Singh as the president of the Republic of Khalistan.

A handwritten declaration appealed to other countries to recognise the Khalistan government and accord permission for opening its embassies in their countries. Khalistan was to be carved out of the state of Punjab and Sikh-dominated areas of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. It was envisaged as a democratic sovereign republic; a secular state in which the rights of minorities would be

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<sup>64</sup>Sharda Jain, op. cit., p. 238.

respected; which would be free from exploitation of man by man; and a state in which the people of Punjab would be offered opportunities for progress and prosperity through freedom of trade, and freedom of religious beliefs and worship.<sup>65</sup> A document entitled "Proclamation of Khalistan Council" was also released, according to which Khalistan was to have its own currency, flag, passport, and stamps. <sup>66</sup>

The declaration charged New Delhi with denial of political power to the Sikhs, the suppression of Sikh cultural traditions, and failure to secure management of Sikh shrines in Pakistan. It stated that the central government was dominated by anti-Sikh Hindus and the Sikh community had liberated itself from the purview of the Indian constitution and law.<sup>67</sup> It appealed to all countries to recognise the Khalistan government and accord permission for opening its embassies in their countries.<sup>68</sup> At a convention held in California on 3 May 1981, Dr Singh claimed that the demand for Khalistan had the approval of the SGPC and Akal Takht, and appealed to Sikhs all over the world to extend their whole-hearted support to him so that the mass movement could force the Government of India to accede to their demands.

It is clear from the foregoing that various Sikh organisations were involved during the period under study in actively propogating the cause of Khalistan. However, except for some instances where the U S and the United Kingdom allowed Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan to enter

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<sup>65</sup>*Khalistan Times*, 3 March 1985.

<sup>66</sup>See Annexure D, Sikh "Agitation in Khalistan" (Note prepared by the Home Ministry) in Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh, *Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Blue Star and After* (New Delhi: Vision books Pvt Ltd, 1984), p. 145.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 143.

their countries and gain publicity on the Khalistan issue,<sup>69</sup> there has been no direct evidence of these countries aiding the Khalistan movement. The signing of the special extradition treaty and an agreement on confiscation of extremists' assets in 1992 between India and the United Kingdom, and its ratification by the British parliament, allayed any remaining doubts on that score.<sup>70</sup> On balance, while the organisations were able to focus international attention on the Khalistan movement and to favourably influence public opinion in some of these countries, they could not mobilise any political support for the Sikh movement.

*The role of Pakistan in the Khalistan crisis*

The role of Pakistan in the Khalistan crisis was, however, another matter. A history of invasions (India and Pakistan have gone to war three times since 1947) has made both India and Pakistan vulnerable and prone to believing that a foreign hand is behind their domestic troubles. Fear and paranoia exist on both sides. It is generally believed that since Delhi helped in the creation of Bangladesh, Pakistan was determined to get even. Former Indian prime minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, believed that Pakistan was involved in terrorism in Punjab.

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<sup>69</sup>There were rumours that Dr Chauhan went on British radio and apparently publicly announced a reward for anyone who would kill Mrs Gandhi, the then prime minister of India.

<sup>70</sup>For details of the treaty see Pashaura Singh and Gerald N. Barrier (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 237-38, p. 246.

Back in the mid-1980s he said that

It is safe to assume that General Zia's regime has been deriving perverse satisfaction from our difficulties. Some of his advisors do not mind even stoking the fire that may, at some future date, offer them an opportunity to avenge the birth of Bangladesh.<sup>71</sup>

According to a Pakistani scholar, distrust of Pakistan has been used by the Indian government and by sections of the Indian press to make the Indian public believe that the deteriorating situation in the Punjab is a result of Pakistani manipulation.<sup>72</sup> However, despite numerous allegations and counter-allegations, the veracity of these charges is difficult to prove.

The Indian government has time and again pointed to the involvement of "a foreign hand," a veiled reference to Pakistan in abetting the movement. India claimed that Pakistan provided Sikh secessionists with sanctuary, arms, money, training and moral support, and encouraged their demand for a separate homeland. It believed that Pakistan was taking a close interest in the affairs of the Punjab by playing up the grievances of the Sikhs and characterising the government of India as a government of the Hindus discriminating against the Sikhs. Pakistan had allegedly also exploited the visits of Sikh pilgrims to holy places in Pakistan by giving them special attention. A note prepared by the home ministry went as far as to describe Dr Jagjit Chauhan and Ganga Singh Dhillon as pawns in

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<sup>71</sup>I.K. Gujral, "Unravelling the Punjabi Knot," *Mainstream*, 26 January 1985.

<sup>72</sup>See Rasul B. Rais, "Internationalization of the Punjab Crisis: A Pakistani Perspective," in K.M. de Silva and R.J. May (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 43. For a Pakistani perspective on the Punjab crisis see Ghani Jafar, *The Sikh Volcano* (Islamabad: Vanguard Books, 1987).



the hands of the Pakistan High Commission, used to denigrate India.<sup>73</sup>

The accusations against Pakistan began to increase in 1986-87 when the Government of India presented its case, based largely on circumstantial evidence, including broadcasts of the Pakistani media, interrogation reports, reports of trans-border encounters, and phone calls.<sup>74</sup>

### *Militancy in Punjab*

In order to study militant linkages in Punjab, it is important to note that Punjab has always had a history of movements which used violence as a method of mobilising people whether in the form of the the Namdhari movement, Ghadar Lehar or Babbar Akalis which with their anti imperialist thrust laid the foundations for the subsequent struggles waged by the Sikhs for the realisation of their causes.<sup>75</sup> Even the demand for the Punjabi suba, which culminated in the formation of the present state in 1966, had its origin in the politico military genre of the Sikh religion from the time of Guru Gobind Singh and the desire for Sikhs to regain the territory ruled by Maharaja Ranjit Singh during the 19th century. Thus the call for an independent state of Khalistan as a home for the Sikhs, was not entirely unexpected.

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<sup>73</sup>Annexure D, "Sikh Agitation in Khalistan" (Note prepared by the Home Ministry) in Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh, op. cit., pp. 150-51.

<sup>74</sup>See Richard P. Cronin, "Crisis in Indian Punjab: Evolution, Issues, Competing Positions and Prospects", Report No.84-152 F, *Congressional Research Service*, Library of Congress, August 1984, p. CRS-27.

<sup>75</sup>Details of the above have been provided in the preceding chapter.

Terrorism is a widespread phenomenon affecting most parts of the present day world. It can be defined as the "method or the theory behind the method whereby an organised group or party seeks to achieve the avowed aim chiefly through systematic use of violence."<sup>76</sup> Others define it as a process of terror involving the following elements: "the act or threat of violence", the emotional reaction, and the social effects".<sup>77</sup> Paul Wilkinson defines it as coercive intimidation, which is, in practice a systematic use of murder and destruction and the threat of murder and destruction in order to terrorise individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands.<sup>78</sup>

Unlike other forms of violence, terrorism is an organised and planned activity with a definite programme and objective. It recognises no ethical boundaries to the use of violence and since its goals are often protracted and difficult, expropriations in the form of bank robberies, kidnappings, hijackings are a common means of sustaining the struggle. Many factors inspire and motivate terrorism. Gurr's model of relative deprivation posits that when a group of people feels discriminated against other members of the larger populace, they start to demand justice or a redressal of their grievances and in the process may go further and want a separate homeland for themselves. Another view is that terrorism is the chosen method of the privileged class and not the downtrodden, though the latter may join the terrorist campaign under pressure or

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<sup>76</sup> J. B. S Hardman, "Terrorism," in E.R. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 14 (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 575.

<sup>77</sup> T.P. Thornton, "Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation," in H. Eckstein (ed.), *Internal War* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 73.

<sup>78</sup> P. Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1986), pp. 23-24.

fear of the terrorists. It can also be said to originate in societies where there is lack of opportunity for political participation and absence of the methods of redressal of grievances among groups. Any of these factors may trigger terrorism in societies.<sup>79</sup>

In Punjab, it was believed, that the militant organisations worked in co-ordination with one another and had strong links with Pakistan. Some of the important ones were the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF); Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF); Bhindrawale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK), Babbars; and Khalistan Liberation Organisation (KLO). The KCF was constituted by the first Panthic Committee in February 1986. Led first by Manbir Singh Cheheru and Sukha Sipahi, it later split up and came under the leadership of Wassan Singh Zaffarwal who was notorious for his involvement in large-scale smuggling of arms from Pakistan.<sup>80</sup> To widen the scope of its activities, the KCF worked with other groups such as the BTFK, formed by Gurbacchan Singh Manochahal in 1987, and the Babbar Khalsa led by Sukhdev Singh Babbar Dasuwal, which was known to have sent a number of its members (such as Wadhwa Singh and Tarseem Singh) across the border for training in handling of arms and explosives.<sup>81</sup>

The government did not produce any explicit evidence, but there were leaks of the interrogation records of some militants who had

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<sup>79</sup>For details on the above see Ted Robert Gurr, "Some Characteristics of Political Terrorism in the 1960s," in Michael Stohl (ed), *The Politics of Terrorism* (NY: Marced Dekker, 1988), pp. 31-35; Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, Vol.13, no. 4, July 1981, pp. 379-99; Sharda Jain, *Politics of Terrorism in India - The case of Punjab* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1995), pp. 93-99.

<sup>80</sup>For details on the KCF and profiles of KCF guerrilla's, including an interview with Zaffarwal, see Joyce. M. Pettigrew, op. cit, pp. 82-100; 143-86.

<sup>81</sup>Ved Marwah, *Uncivil Wars, The Pathology of Terrorism in India* (New Delhi: INDUS, 1995), pp. 213-24.

been apprehended. The Indian government buttressed its argument by later evidence which showed that between 1986 and 1989 the quantity of apprehended weaponry increased: AK rifles from 73 to 295; other guns and rifles from 155 to 300; handguns from 584 to 635; and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) from 3 to 17.<sup>82</sup> Equipment used by the militants included sophisticated General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs) and explosives, with some advanced accessories such as night vision equipment, Dragunov sniper rifles, and transceiver sets. Babbar Khalsa International leaders like Talwinder Singh Parmar and Gurdip Singh Sibia of Babbar Khalsa UK, who surrendered in 1992, admitted to links with Pakistan. They had been living in Pakistan for the past 18 months, but Pakistan denied any responsibility and argued that confessional statements hardly constituted proof.<sup>83</sup>

Though not much information is available on the logistics and arms provided to the insurgents, recovery of Chinese-made AKMs (popularly listed as AK-47 assault rifles) and RPGs pointed to Pakistan's involvement. It was believed that these could not have come to India without the active support and facilitation of an outside force. Armed intrusions across the Pakistani border, and interrogation of terrorists who were apprehended by Indian security forces, also revealed the existence of many camps training Sikh militants in such places as Sialkot, Gujranwala, Lahore, Kasur, Sargodha, Abbotaabad, Murree and Faisalabad. One such source, Amrik Singh of Gurdaspur district, who was the working president of the Akal Federation, a militant outfit based in Pakistan, confessed that following Operation Blue Star he had crossed the border, along with Wassan Singh

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<sup>82</sup>Manoj Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Frontline*, 28 May -10 June 1988, p. 14.

Zafarwal, and at the behest of a Pakistani official sent 100 boys into Pakistan in 1984. Some 375 youth were being motivated and trained in Faisalabad to fight for Khalistan.

In April 1985, meetings were held in Lahore between militant leaders like Amrik Singh, Gurjit Singh and Attinderpal Singh of the AISSF, and Ajaib Singh (Damdami Taksal), with Pakistan officials to discuss the issue. Between February and July 1986, Pakistani intelligence headed by Malik sent more than 100 trained terrorists, grouped in twelve teams, across the Punjab border. Pressure was allegedly being put on Gurjit Singh to declare the formation of Khalistan, or the flow of weapons to Punjab would be cut off.

The White Paper prepared by the government of India stated as early as 1984 that the militants were able to obtain sophisticated arms through sources outside the country and by developing clandestine links with sources within the country. The government believed that there were large illegal flows of arms into India from across the border and that the terrorists were receiving different types of active support from certain foreign forces, but could not divulge more information for the sake of public interest.<sup>84</sup>

The response of the expatriate Sikhs to this was interesting. The Blue Paper brought out by the World Sikh Organisation alleged that some of the arms found in the precincts of the Golden Temple were gift-wrapped and planted in the Golden Temple. They claimed that the arms shown in the video clips had been prepared by government

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<sup>84</sup>*White Paper on the Punjab Agitation* (New Delhi: Government of India, 10 July 1984) p. 57.

agents as part of a misinformation campaign, and pointed out that the brand new identification labels were still intact; if the Chinese and/or Pakistanis had supplied these arms they would have at least removed the labels.<sup>85</sup>

In 1990, the Governor of Punjab state in India, Virendra Verma, testified to the involvement of Pakistan in training and encouraging subversive activities in India. He said that according to Indian intelligence agencies there was a man in the Pakistani province of Sind who taught *Gurbani* (songs in praise of the Gurus) to 300 Muslims who wore turbans and spoke fluent Punjabi. They were meant to infiltrate the state and spread terror.<sup>86</sup>

Details of flights taken by non-Indian Sikhs residing in the US, Canada and the United Kingdom were given as evidence that Pakistan was allowing them to use its territory for hostile acts against India. Another source, Mohan Inder Singh Sachdev, affiliated to the International Youth Federation in Canada and arrested in January 1987, gave in his confessional statement details of the flow of money from Canada to Pakistan and the arrangements in Canada to purchase weapons for shipment to Punjab.<sup>87</sup>

Although it may be argued that there is little documentary evidence to prove Pakistan's complicity in abetting the Sikh movement, many Indians remain convinced of Pakistan's connivance in Punjab. Some even believed that Pakistan was working to destabilise both Kashmir

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<sup>85</sup>*Blue Paper on the Massacre in the Sikh Homeland - In Response to Mrs Gandhi's White Paper Dated 10 July 1984*, New York: World Sikh Organisation, 25 July 1984).

<sup>86</sup>*Frontline*, 8-12 December 1990.

<sup>87</sup>For details see *ibid.*, p. 15.

and Punjab through what is popularly referred to as the K2 (Kashmir-Khalistan ) plan.<sup>88</sup> Another point of view, somewhat far-fetched, saw the Punjab crisis as an international conspiracy hatched by America, Britain and Canada.<sup>89</sup> According to one of its proponents, "All the above mentioned countries were involved, especially the US, as it wanted to control Kashmir, and Punjab is a stepping stone to Kashmir."<sup>90</sup>

Another important external link to the Punjab crisis is provided by the strong nexus between the militants and large-scale smuggling operations. Militancy is inextricably linked with drug trafficking, which has been rampant the world over and used for a myriad of purposes: by military establishments to sustain their regimes, by the financial underworld to help generate black money, and by insurgents as a means of generating income to buy arms for their cause.

In South Asia particularly, the growing nexus of "narco-terrorism" has emerged as an area of great concern. The flow of hard drugs from Afghanistan and Pakistan has undoubtedly had a bearing on the Punjab crisis. From the early 1980s, with the liberalisation of import policies by India, the nature of smuggling changed from transistor sets and watches to hard drugs. According to one theory, "Khalistan served as a respectable facade for massive international drug running though there are a handful of fanatics fighting for the Khalistani cause."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Based on wide-ranging interviews held with a cross-section of political influentials in Punjab during the course of my field work in July-November 1996.

<sup>89</sup>This is the line taken by the Communists in India.

<sup>90</sup>Interview with Mr Joginder Dayal, Secretary, Communist Party of India (Punjab) on 6 November 1996.

<sup>91</sup>*Frontline*, May-June, 1988, p. 19.

However, one cannot look at the Khalistan issue as a by-product of smuggling operations. The issue of drug trafficking is important in that it establishes external links for covert financial assistance to the warring groups and allows outside powers to provide covert assistance. It is a view held widely in informed circles in India that Pakistan has used its support for militancy in Punjab as a form of surrogate warfare: one for which it can never be held directly responsible but which could nonetheless weaken the stability of India.

*Khalistan - a viable proposition?*

Having studied the the external dimensions of the Khalistan crisis, one might ask whether Khalistan was ever a viable proposition. According to Stephen Cohen, Khalistan was not so much an independent movement as an expression of injustice meted out to the Sikhs. An independent Khalistan, the Sikhs soon realised, was not strategically viable; they were better off in a larger thriving India, but wanted some gratification or apology for the attack on the Golden Temple and the killings and humiliation of Sikhs.<sup>92</sup> Arun Singh, a former minister in Rajeev Gandhi's cabinet, doubted whether there was any real evidence of a mass movement for secession from India. "Insurgency is economic and not political and if there was a problem, India would be brought to its knees because Punjab is the granary of India."<sup>93</sup>

A closer scrutiny of the facts lends weight to these sentiments. The demand for Khalistan was fraught with difficulties from the very

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<sup>92</sup>Interview with Prof. Stephen Cohen, University of Urbana Champaign, Illinois, June 1996.

<sup>93</sup>Interview with Arun Singh, University of Urbana Champaign, Illinois, June 1996.



outset. First, the existence of an independent Khalistan was unacceptable to India, which would resist it wholeheartedly. A secessionist movement in India would have made its frontiers vulnerable to outside powers and, more significantly, would have challenged the integrity of the country. India was already struggling to contain ethnic insurgencies in different parts of the country. The creation of an independent state of Khalistan could have led to other ethnic communities demanding autonomy, producing a series of rebellions which could have endangered the unity of the Indian state, an eventuality the federal government was not prepared to accept.

Second, it is generally recognised that even in the event of its formation, Khalistan would have been economically and strategically non-viable. Its borders would have been too long as compared to its small size and area. Although Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan believed that agriculture would be the mainstay of the economy of Khalistan and that it was through agro-industries, small-scale industries, foreign exchange remittances from emigrants, and skilled manpower that Khalistan would survive, not many shared his view.<sup>94</sup> His belief that in the event of Khalistan forming a confederation with Kashmir, Khalistan would become another centre of international tourism.<sup>95</sup> was also not borne out by the realities. Given its land-locked nature, Khalistan would have have been totally dependent on other powers and this could well have proved a handicap for trading purposes.

While politically and ideologically Khalistan was to be based on the ideology of Guru Nanak, this rather simplistic assumption

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<sup>94</sup>Maqsood Ahmed Masod and Peter Stockdale, *The Khalistan Riddle* (Islamabad: Modern Book Depot, 1988), pp. 141-42.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 143; p. 146.

overlooked the numerical strength of the Hindus who are found in great numbers in Punjab. After 1966, Sikhs constituted 54 percent of total population of Punjab and the the Hindus made up 45 percent. The last census of 1991 showed an increase in the Sikh population to 65 percent. But even under these circumstances, the Hindus constitute a sizeable minority.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, if the Khalistan state were to include areas of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh in which the Hindus dominate, Sikh numbers would have been reduced further in Khalistan.

Punjab has a culture and language that transcends religious boundaries. Although British communal policies of separate communal electorates accentuated communal divisions, which existed even after independence, and have been used time and again by elites and politicians to adversely affect the formation of a secular polity in Punjab, the composite linguistic cultural ethos of Punjab has had its own deep-rooted dynamism.<sup>97</sup> According to one source, the conception of Khalistan was erroneous since it was based on a false reading of Sikh history and a lack of understanding of the symbiosis that existed between the two communities.<sup>98</sup>

The relationship between the two communities, Hindu and Sikh, may have been strained but practices such as inter-marriage, the custom of the eldest son of some families becoming a baptised Sikh, and reverence for some Sikh gurus by Hindus, are all small instances of the deep bonding between the two communities.

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<sup>96</sup>See *Census of India 1991, Series 1, Paper 1 of 1995* (New Delhi: Registrar General and Census Commission, 1995), pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>97</sup>For an expansion of this idea, see Pramod Kumar, "Violence in Punjab," *Seminar*, 434, October 1995, pp. 55-58.

<sup>98</sup>Manoj Joshi, *Combating Terrorism in Punjab*, op. cit., p. 18.

Although the Khalistan cause was taken up by expatriates like Dr Chauhan and Ganga Singh Dhillon, it never found a meaningful expression among the Sikh people at large. It remained a vision nurtured with a passion by Sikhs who lived overseas.<sup>99</sup> Most political leaders abstained from making definite statements on Khalistan.<sup>100</sup> Even Bhindranwale did not openly demand Khalistan. He is supposed to have said in one of his speeches that he did not demand Khalistan, but if the government gave it he would not reject it.<sup>101</sup> Bhindranwale felt that the formation of Khalistan would save the community from exploitation by the central government and preserve the purity of the Sikh community.

With the rise of militancy, the rhetoric shifted dramatically. Most militant groups demanded Khalistan; but the subsequent overthrow of these groups and the people's rejection of violence and disorder marked the end of the Khalistan movement. The non-viability of Khalistan as a stable political, geographical and economic entity exposed the hollowness of the claims of the self-styled proponents of Khalistan.

### *Conclusion*

Both the Baluch and Khalistan movements are unique in nature and composition, but there is nonetheless a common thread running through them. Both movements turned secessionist at one point and sought to carve out independent territories for themselves. Both were

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<sup>99</sup>Robin Jeffrey, *Whats Happening to India*, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>100</sup>For interviews with leaders and prominent personalities see Satinder Singh *Khalistan: An Academic Analysis* (New Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1982), pp. 142-82.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Gurtej Singh, an ex-IAS officer and a close aide of Bhindranwale, in Chandigarh, October 1996.

extremely vulnerable border territories and neither India nor Pakistan would have been willing to open up their frontiers by acceding to the demand for independence.

A crucial factor in the decline of both movements was the lack of concrete external support. There were several powers involved in the Baluch crisis, but none were willing to extend their wholehearted support for the realisation of an Independent or Greater Baluchistan. External support for the Baluch remained largely confined to verbal sympathy and moral support. In the case of Khalistan, large-scale material and military assistance was allegedly provided by Pakistan. This, however, failed to make an appreciable impact on the movement for an independent state of Khalistan.

Independence was never a viable proposition for either of the movements. There was no international support, political, diplomatic or moral, for carving out independent states. Major powers, including the US, the former Soviet Union and China, which had important concerns in South Asia, remained wary of any separatist tendencies in the region, which would have affected their long-term security interests. The absence of committed outside support, the swift and forceful response of the two federal states, and the nature of the insurgencies sealed the fates of the two movements.

## CONCLUSION

It was a common view in the 1950s and 1960s among social theorists, looking at the post-colonial states of Asia and Africa, that with the development of the industrial society, the political significance of ethnic or cultural cleavages would diminish and disappear over time. However, the experience of most newly independent multi-ethnic states has not borne out this expectation. Indeed the problem of integrating ethnically disparate groups has been one of the most onerous tasks of nation-building.

This thesis has focussed on elucidating current views of the role of ethnicity in Third World countries. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are many theories which explain the rise of ethnic conflict. Some of these include: the modernisation school which posits that ethnic conflicts would fade away with the passage of time; the theory of relative deprivation which stresses the psychological underpinnings of violent action caused by the sense of relative deprivation among people against the political system; the internal colonialism model which maintains that conflict is produced when a group is convinced that it has been turned into an internal colony by the dominant ethnic group, and the instrumentalist theory which views ethnicity as a social and political construction of the elites to derive political and economic advantages for the groups and themselves. This thesis has subscribed to the view that no one theory can be applied exclusively to explain the rise of separatism. It has used various theories to highlight certain aspects of conflicts in South Asia, particularly those involving the Baluch in Pakistan and the Sikhs in India.

While attempting to examine the process of nation-building in South Asia, this thesis pursued two objectives. First, it argued that it was impossible to understand fully the dynamics of ethnic conflict without analysing the nature of a movement, the state's response, and the role of external factors. Moreover, the interaction between these variables is dynamic; and at each stage of the progression of the movement these variables were interacting with each other. They have been used to explain the failure of the Baluch and the Khalistan movement. As mentioned earlier, this model cannot explain all the complexities of a holistic situation but serves as a paradigm. Second, this thesis examined the state in South Asia, with particular reference to Pakistan and India, and the effects of the policies adopted by the states in the post-colonial era.

The prospects for secession by an ethnic group depend on the above mentioned factors. The policies of the state have a direct bearing on the ethnic struggle. The state plays a critical role in exacerbating, as well as defusing, ethnic challenges and provides the initial impetus for political mobilisation. Misguided policies can aggravate ethnic problems and turn potentially violent situations into deadly confrontations. On the other hand, relatively benign and accommodating policies can keep countries intact even in the most difficult circumstances. According to Michael Brown, demographic factors and ethnic geography, fears and goals of ethnic groups, and economic factors and trends are not immutable, but are dynamic factors that are influenced to a significant degree by governmental initiatives and policies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Michael E. Brown, "The Impact of Government Policies on Ethnic Relations," in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 512.

If the strategies of the state help to germinate separatist feelings among ethnic groups, the nature of the movement decides its future. The nature of the movement is an indication of its relative strength in the prevailing political environment. It encompasses organisational structure, leadership patterns, and the role of elites; these determine the duration of the movement and its capacity to wage a protracted struggle. But even if the movement is cohesive, with a strong leadership base and infrastructure, it is unlikely to achieve secession on its own.

A crucial factor is external support, either from an external power or from a diaspora; these provide both moral and material help to the insurgents. External intervention takes place because the contending parties in a civil strife develop external linkages and seek external help from them to strengthen their position in the domestic strife, or because external actors take the opportunity to restructure the international and regional situation to their advantage. However, external intervention has its limitations. In international law ethnic minorities lack the right of self-determination. External support is thus difficult to obtain. Most multi-ethnic states refrain from giving their whole-hearted support to separatist movements for fear of risking a similar situation in their own territory. Further, no state is willing to commit itself to a movement that appears weak.

However, external support is effective only if the movement is strong in all other respects. The creation of Bangladesh, which remains the only successful secessionist movement in the subcontinent, demonstrates this. The people in East Pakistan were disillusioned with the policies of the federal government in Pakistan; their

separatist movement had a strong organisational base and a mass-based appeal; and intervention by India ultimately helped in the creation of the new state. If the movement had not been strong enough, external support would not have precipitated such an event; on the other hand, without external support secession would undoubtedly have been difficult. Thus the presence of all three factors is vital to the success of any movement. For example, the birth of the LTTE can be explained by discriminatory strategies of past governments in Sri Lanka; its tenacity and the long duration of its struggle can be attributed to the well organised nature of the LTTE itself, but the realisation of an Eelam, or a separate homeland, needs the assistance of an external power, which appears under the present circumstances to be unlikely.

The three factors of the nature of the movement, external support and response of the government - apply wholly to the secessionist activities involving the Baluch and the Sikhs. The mobilising factors and the nature of the movements were very different in the two cases, but two factors were common to both: the strategies of the states, which maintained a combination of coercion and conciliation; and the presence of external intervention.

The main reasons for the decline of the Baluch insurgency can be attributed to the weak nature of the movement; the efficacy of the strategies pursued by the central leadership, particularly Zia-ul-Haq; and, more importantly, the lack of any meaningful outside support. In terms of the nature of the movement, the potential for Baluch protest had been weakened by the territorial dispersion of the Baluch across three countries and several provinces of Pakistan. With low literacy



rates, late development of the Baluchi script, and the absence of an educated middle class, the Baluch movement could not develop a mass character. Moreover, differences among the Baluch leadership on the means and ends of their struggle, fragmented character of the Baluch tribes, and competing rivalries between the Baluch and Pushtuns in the province also militated against political assertion of the Baluch community.

As discussed in Chapter 4, these weaknesses were exploited by the central leadership, under General Zia ul Haq, by co-option of tribal leaders, and strategic allocation of funds for developmental programs. With the strategies geared more towards assimilation and conciliation, rather than confrontation, there was little incentive for the tribes to fight for an independent Baluchistan.

Lack of support from outside powers made the emergence of an independent or greater Baluchistan even more problematic. Although there were several powers involved in the Baluch crisis, none was willing to extend its wholehearted support for the secession of Baluchistan from Pakistan. Their assistance was largely confined to verbal sympathy and moral empathy. Major powers, including the United States, the Soviet Union and China (which had important concerns in South Asia) remained wary of any trend towards "Balkanisation" in the region, which would have affected their long-term security interests.

But while uneven distribution of resources leading to the underdeveloped nature of Baluchistan and exploitative tendencies of the central government were significant factors propelling the

separatist demands of the Baluch, these hardly explain the demand for Khalistan by the Sikhs in Indian Punjab. Going by all socio-economic indicators, Punjab is clearly one of the most prosperous states of India, with relatively high literacy rates and one of the highest per capita incomes in the country. The coming of the green revolution increased food production, making Punjab the granary of India. Yet some Sikhs turned separatist.

The Punjab crisis was essentially a part of the Sikhs' quest for a separate religious identity *vis-a-vis* the Hindus and for more political autonomy. Political dithering and non-resolution of water and boundary disputes issues, compounded by the centralising policies of the Congress government, made the Sikhs clamour for a separate homeland. The selection of the religious symbol by the central and state elites underscored the religious identity of the Sikhs *vis-a-vis* the Hindus, with its extreme manifestation being the demand for Khalistan. This contributed to communal unrest and the upsurge of ethnic sentiments. In time all other parties tapped into the reservoir of ethnic mobilisation which resulted in more than a decade of violence.

The Khalistan movement proved to be enduring because, by the early 1980s, it had all the three factors working in its favour. First, the centralising policies of the state had already sown the seeds of discontent among the Sikhs. Second, the movement was strong from the start; it drew its initial capacity for action from a developed organisational infrastructure which comprised *inter alia* several militant outfits such as the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), and Khalistan Liberation

Organisation (KLO). Moreover, the support for the cause of Khalistan by the Sikh people, outraged by the attack on the Golden Temple in June 1984 and the massacres of the Sikhs that followed the assassination of Mrs Gandhi later that year, made militants formidable players. Third, external support from the Sikh diaspora in the US and UK, as well as from Pakistan, which was allegedly providing Sikh secessionists with sanctuary, arms, money, and training, helped to sustain the movement.

At the same time it must be emphasised that the lack of unequivocal, external support for an independent Khalistan was a major setback to the movement's plans. The reasons for the failure of the movement, also lay with the methods used by the state to crush the militant movement. It was deploying, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, the army, the federal police, and the paramilitary forces, who worked through a series of well-planned operations to overcome the militants. By this time the movement itself had come under considerable pressure. The various organisations were losing support from the people; their membership had begun to attract lumpen elements who were joining the movements for the lure of money rather than the long cherished cause of a separate homeland for the Sikhs. Incarceration and the killing of prominent militant leaders weakened the organisations and made them susceptible to suppression by federal agencies. The entire movement had begun to lose direction by 1991. Added to this, Pakistani support, under increasing pressure from the West, declined considerably making it harder for the movement to stay alive. Even if external support was available, it could do little in the face of the virtual annihilation of the leadership and the complete control exercised by the federal

government. Ultimately none of the three factors worked in the favour of the movement.

The modern state as seen in the Baluch and Sikh case studies, acts as the dominant agent of change and control in Third World countries. Ultimately it remains the only societal organisation capable of dealing with separatism efficiently. Ethnic conflict is but a political contradiction between the mono-ethnic character of the state power structure and the polyethnic social system.

Post-colonial development is characterised not so much by nation-building, as is commonly assumed, but by state building. The latter is undertaken as a means to stabilise, extend and strengthen the institutions of the central state as a precondition for national integration and modernisation. The consolidation of state power is justified not only to ward off possible external threats but to defend the dominant ethnic group's monopoly on state power.<sup>2</sup>

In South Asia, nation-building has not been easy - either in democracies or in authoritarian states. As discussed in Chapter 2, countries in South Asia have used different strategies to forge a cohesive nationalism ranging from accommodative policies, through coercive measures, to outright suppression. Civilian democratic regimes, having decentralised federal structures are more prone to

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<sup>2</sup>Who constitutes the dominant ethnic group depends on several ethnic variables: in China it is the Han; in India, it is the upper caste Hindus; in the United States the Whites. There are several ways of securing this privileged position: through democracy, where the sheer numbers allow a particular group to maintain its dominance over others or through ethnic doctrines such as *bhumiputra* (sons of the soil) in Malaysia, Brunei and Fiji, which ensure the political supremacy of an indigenous ethnic group which does not necessarily have numerical dominance. See Dawa Norbu *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.190.

using negotiation and bargaining for accommodation. Of course, democracies are not flawless when it comes to addressing ethnic problems, but authoritarian or military structures tend to suppress tensions through threat or use of coercion. But a caveat is in order. The continuity in the response of the Pakistani state to ethnic groups under both democratic and authoritarian regimes, and the Sri Lankan response to Tamil aspirations in a functioning democratic system, point to the danger of generalisations.

The modern state pursues all means to hold on to the units pursuing autonomy or self-governance. The experience of India and Pakistan has been similar in this regard. When demands became aggressive and degenerated into secessionist conflicts which challenged the integrity of the state, both states moved away from appeasement to force and repression.

Although the first generation of post-1947 leadership in India seemed more inclined than its Pakistani counterparts to recognise and accommodate ethnic, linguistic and religious differences, neither group questioned the construction of a state along ethnic lines. Both sets of leaders wanted to create unified nation-states but adopted significantly different strategies and methods for fostering a sense of nationhood among ethnically and linguistically diverse groups.

India's accommodative policies have been a function of its relatively democratic, decentralised framework. It has, in some measure, responded to the growing challenges of nation-building by its secular nationalism, social modernisation, economic development, and devolution of power. Its historical overlay encompasses a great

variety of lesser traditions and sheer diversity has made for an essentially tolerant milieu, facilitating coexistence between the centre and regions. Second, power has not been limited to a particular group or class. No group has ever enjoyed a monopoly on authority, and new groups have been continuously drawn into the power ambit.

The Indian state has sought to prevent ethnic dissidence by timely and often anticipatory legislation. This includes granting special rights and privileges to the depressed sections of the community; redrawing administrative borders according to cultural linguistic principles; and bargaining with recalcitrant groups and at times being able to co-opt secessionist groups into the political mainstream. However, the continuing strife in Kashmir, and even the case of Punjab shows that the Indian model has not been a complete success.

Where liberal constitutionalism and power-sharing arrangements have failed to produce the desired results, force and coercion have been employed to curb violent activism and bring the militants to the negotiating table. These have intensified ethnic alienation, as in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. A drift towards centralisation has also amplified ethnic unrest. A strong indication of this fact was that President's Rule was invoked as many as 66 times between 1968 and early 1989 to subjugate the state governments to the centre.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of Pakistan, the framework of ethnic conflict management has remained fragile due to the centralised character of its federal structure. Its formation in 1947 did not automatically translate into

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<sup>3</sup>Arend Lijphart, *The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Reinterpretation* RGICS Paper No 18 (New Delhi: Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1994), p. 19.

popular support for the new leadership among the country's diverse ethnic groups. With no national parties or uniform culture, to forge unity amongst the provinces, Islam became the only viable means of maintaining the unity of the country. Highly centralising policies carried out by the state elites, primarily the armed forces and the civilian bureaucracy, widened cleavages between the provinces and the centre. The long spells of military rule under Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and General Zia ul Haq did little to increase the political and economic participation of disadvantaged groups such as the Sindhis and the Baluch. Unwilling to reorient its socio-economic policy, the state became even more dependent on its universalist Islamic rhetoric after 1971. But given the fundamental biases of Pakistan's developmental agenda, and the state's ambivalent attitude towards Islam, the Islamic stance made little headway and ethnic tensions continued to escalate.

Generally speaking, the use of coercive power by the state to suppress cultural plurality and ethnic resurgence more often than not has pushed the aggrieved groups towards violence, and in some cases to a bid for secession. An important finding of this thesis is that if genuine autonomy is granted at an early stage, and this autonomy is respected by the state, there is a good chance of stemming separatist tendencies. It is only when non-dominant groups fail to get justice and see no prospect for maintaining and improving their status within the framework of existing constitutional parameters that they challenge the state's legitimacy. In India, Kashmir is one such example where the dismissal of Farooq Abdullah in 1984 on the grounds that he had lost majority support in the assembly commenced the process of alienation in Kashmir. Had the Indian government refrained from

adopting centralising policies in the first place, the situation may not have snowballed into such a crisis.

It should be reiterated here that although India has used coercive powers and state repression to quell recalcitrant groups in various turbulent regions, its longer history of democracy has enabled its regional political economies and electoral processes to maintain greater resilience against central interference. Pakistan's regional social and economic formations by contrast have been amenable to political manipulation by a military-bureaucratic dominated centre.

There is a need for equitable distribution of economic benefits, workable mechanisms for elite settlements, and power-sharing through federalism and decentralisation, in order to confront the growing challenges of politicised ethnicity in most multi-ethnic societies. Coercion and force are often favoured as policy options because central authorities believe that such actions will produce quick and permanent solutions. This, of course, is seldom true. Force and coercion have proved to be inadequate palliatives for complex ethnic issues. In cases where they succeed, the solutions may be short-lived and tensions may recur. Devolution of state authority, and the enforcement of democratic values are the best long-term alternatives to securing ethnic justice and peace in the subcontinent.



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