

1998

India in the United Nations: The First Years

Balachandra Rajan

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/economicsperg_ppe



Part of the [Economics Commons](#)

Citation of this paper:

Rajan, Balachandra. "India in the United Nations: The First Years." Political Economy Research Group. Papers in Political Economy, 85. London, ON: Department of Economics, University of Western Ontario (1998).

POLITICAL
ECONOMY
RESEARCH
GROUP

PAPERS IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Paper No. 85

"India in the United Nations: The
First Years"

Balachandra Rajan

53777001

53778001

53779001

53780001

ECONOMICS REFERENCE CENTRE

SEP 28 1998

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

The Political Economy Research Group was established in the faculty of Social Science at the University of Western Ontario in 1988. Its purpose is to foster scholarship, teaching and interdisciplinary research in political economy, with a focus on:

1. the application of economic models and methods to the study of political processes and institutions,
2. the economic impact of political processes and institutions,
3. the influence of economic factors on the formation of public policy and on institutional change,
4. the politics of economic policy making,
5. the political, social, and economic effects of public policy.

Co-directors:

Ronald Wintrobe (Economics)
Robert Young (Political Science)

Board of Directors:

Peter Howitt (Economics)
B.B. Kymlicka (Political Science)
John N. McDougall (Political Science)
Peter Neary (History)
John Whalley (Economics)

Staff:

Jayne Dewar

For further information:

Political Economy Research Group,
Department of Economics,
Social Science Centre,
London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5C2
phone: (519) 661-3877
fax: (519) 661-3292

ISSN: 1181-7151
ISBN: 0-7714-2115-X

**INDIA IN THE UNITED NATIONS:
THE FIRST YEARS**

**Balachandra Rajan
Professor Emeritus
The University of Western Ontario**

POLITICAL ECONOMY RESEARCH GROUP SEMINAR

March, 1998

India in the United Nations: The First Years

This statement is going to be analytical and not anecdotal, but if you want anecdotal information, you should be able to obtain it during the question period.

I want to talk about India's positioning and repositioning in the United Nations in the early years of its existence and I would like to start by saying that the various provisions of the United Nations Charter are in contention with each other and that, as a result, it is a highly indeterminate document, subject at all times to the politics of reading. One of the provisions of the United Nations Charter speaks of the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination, and India, at the San Francisco Conference, was influential in insisting on the inclusion of the word "peoples", recognizing that a people under domination could be denied the title of "nationhood".

The rights of peoples and nations to self-determination might be numbered among the progressive features of the Charter. The article, I think it is 55, which speaks of the obligation of the Economic and Social Council, to promote human rights, might be regarded as another progressive provision of the Charter. On the other hand, Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter (or is it Article 7, paragraph 2 – I'm not sure, not having the Charter in front of me) says that nothing in this Charter shall allow the United Nations to intervene in the domestic affairs of states and that is a restrictive provision in the Charter. The relationship of the restrictive provision to the progressive provisions and the restrictions which can be found on closer inspection, even in the progressive provisions, constitute the field of contentiousness and the persisting indeterminacy of the Charter.

When you say that nothing in the present Charter allows the United Nations to intervene in the domestic affairs of state, you can point to the overriding force, if you will, of the word

“nothing” as an absolute inhibition on the rights of intervention of member states of the United Nations. The word “nothing” has often been so interpreted as a kind of omnibus exclusion but, on the other hand, you could also argue that no provision of the Charter can be interpreted in such a way as to interfere with, or make impossible, or totally frustrate, the fundamental intent of the Charter.

You could question the scope of the word “intervene” and you could then argue that anything short of territorial incursion does not constitute intervention. Exhortation does not constitute intervention. Recommendations in Council do not constitute intervention. Economic measures directed against a member state do not self-evidently constitute intervention because if they did, the United States would have been in violation of the Charter ever since the beginning of the Cuban Affair.

You could ask yourself, what is meant by the domestic affairs of states? Is there a point at which domestic affairs cease to be domestic? Can you carry out genocide on the territory of a member state and then cite this particular provision of the Charter as prohibiting intervention? It is apparent that you cannot and the usual escape route in these circumstances has been to argue that when the conduct of a member state is in flagrant violation of the overall intent of the Charter, and when a situation arises in consequence that becomes a threat to international peace and security, then intervention, including forcible intervention, is indeed justifiable because the provisions of the Security Council calling for the maintenance of international peace and security are then attracted and override the “nothing” in Article 7, paragraph 2.

As I lay out the problems, you can see that these provisions interlock with each other and undermine each other to a remarkable extent. In fact, it is not possible to treat the United Nations

Charter as an internally consistent document. Since it is not internally consistent, the total intent and meaning of the Charter will be subject at all times to interpretation. Therefore the history of interpretation of the UN Charter within the United Nations itself, does become a matter of major importance.

Progressive interpretations of the Charter have always minimized the scope of that “nothing”. They have always minimized the scope of “intervention” so that a considerable amount of action could be taken without actually being said to constitute intervention. They also tended to question the scope of the term “domestic affairs”. But on the other side of the possibilities of reading “the right of peoples and nations to self-determination”, has to be taken in conjunction with the Charter’s repeated references to the political independence and territorial integrity of member states. If you respect the political independence and territorial integrity of member states, you might argue that it then follows that the right of self-determination has to be exercised within the parameters of that territorial integrity, and that it is not necessarily a simple expression of the popular will that is to be taken into account in determining such matters.

Again and again, in situations like this, you find yourself involved in the contention between the various provisions of the Charter and my subsequent argument will be that India found herself, perhaps more than any other member state in the United Nations, at the centre of this contentiousness and that in repositioning herself, within this contentiousness, she has in fact gradually shifted from a progressive to a defensive interpretation of the Charter.

We were, when we entered the United Nations, enthusiastic about the right of self-determination. We did see the independence of India, or the gaining of India’s independence, as being the beginning of a long process by which empires everywhere would be dismantled, as in

fact they have been historically dismantled. We took an active part in encouraging the attainment of independence by the various peoples of French North Africa, and later on by others who sought independence from colonial rule. In many cases the Delegation of India to the United Nations provided the strategies and even drafted the resolutions. (If I may be anecdotal for a minute, I know that, because I drafted some of the resolutions myself.) But I think that the commitment to self-determination, the absolute and enthusiastic commitment – the commitment to it almost as if the nature of self-determination was self-evident and didn't need to be further discussed – that commitment began to weaken gradually but inevitably.

The crucial turn, the revisionary moment in India's understanding of the Charter and her politics of reading it, came when the Kashmir case was brought before the United Nations and this was, I think, the most momentous action to be undertaken in the history of India's foreign policy.

I have to put before you some of the context of that case. India had attained independence but independence at a terrible cost. The cost was the division of India into India and Pakistan. Moreover, that was not the entire consequence. There were also 500 odd (I may not be exact about the number) native states whose situation in relationship to this division was left completely indeterminate. As a result of a remarkable effort at consolidation, carried through by Vallabhbhai Patel and V.P. Menon, all but three of these states decided to join India.

Junagadh, an extremely small state – a pimple on the face of India as Krishna Menon once said of Goa – decided that it would join Pakistan. A popular uprising, or what we used to call a “popular uprising”, disposed of that particular problem. The ruler of Junagadh was deposed and Junagadh joined India. Hyderabad, a considerably larger state, comparable to

Quebec, and situated in much the same geographical position as Quebec in relation to Canada, decided that it was going to be independent. A popular uprising also took place in Hyderabad. The Nizam was overthrown and the state acceded to India. There remained a third state and that was Jammu and Kashmir. Two states had acceded eventually to India, and in both cases, the peoples of these two states claimed to have exercised their right to self-determination in overriding the wishes of their rulers.

The third state was Jammu and Kashmir and J&K found itself confronting a rebellion, aided and abetted by Pakistan, not in the sense of a formal armed intrusion but in the sense of guerrilla forces being equipped and trained. A popular uprising was encouraged much in the manner of Junagadh and Hyderabad. The ruling power was faced with a situation in which the overthrow of the monarchy was likely, and India was then asked for its help. India said that it could only give its help if the state were to accede to India so that it would then be protecting its own territorial integrity and political independence in terms of a document such as the United Nations Charter.

So the Maharaja of Kashmir acceded to India and then, unfortunately for India, the advice of Lord Mountbatten, that evil genius of Indian politics, was followed, and the case was taken to the United Nations. The United Nations was advised that a threat to international peace and security existed as a result of the supporting of rebellious elements in the State by Pakistan and that Pakistan should therefore be advised to cease and desist.

The reference to the United Nations was, I think, a grievous mistake because any such reference was almost certain to lead to an expansion of the agenda to include not only this particular case but the two other cases, and there was really no means, once you referred the

matter to the United Nations of preventing this expansion of the agenda. Because the other two cases could only be defended as the exercising of the right to self-determination by the peoples of Junagadh and Hyderabad, that same right of popular self-determination inevitably would become attracted to the Jammu and Kashmir case. India's rather naive assumption that the J&K case could be isolated and could be treated as if the other two cases never existed, or were past history and therefore could be done away with and put away, was simply unsustainable in the United Nations and we should have known this and didn't. And because we didn't, that inevitable expansion of the agenda took place and Zafarullah Khan, perhaps one of the best argumentative intelligences in the United Nations, remorselessly seized upon this matter of principle and drove it home and yet again drove it home; unrelentingly insistent that if the principle of self-determination had been invoked in the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad, that same principle of self-determination had to prevail in the case of Kashmir.

Gopal Swami Ayengar, who was then India's representative on the special mission concerned with this case before the Security Council took, in my view, the proper legal position but it was only a legal position. The argument was that the state had acceded legally to India. It was now part of the territory of India. The United Nations really had no *locus standi* in this matter beyond asking Pakistan not to interfere any more with the territorial integrity of India. Anything outside that limited function was *ultra-vire*, and India should not and would not recognize any finding by the Security Council, or any urging by the Security Council, on any matter other than the question of the removal of Pakistan's interference from the soil of Jammu and Kashmir.

That was the position that he took and I think that, although it was embarrassing, it was the only thing that could be done in the circumstances if India felt, as indeed it felt then, and feels now, that the possession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was vital to its own security and to the protection of its borders. I think one has to remember when one thinks about principles, and the United Nations Charter, and the submission of this case, to the United Nations, that India had suffered this terrible mutilation of partition to begin with. India might have suffered much more if those 500 native states had decided to go in miscellaneous ways. The total fragmentation of India might have taken place. That was the state of terrible uncertainty to which the future of the sub-continent had been consigned.

It was very strongly felt, I think by everyone in India, that enough was enough, and that if we were to give another inch, it would be the beginning of the end. Many of us felt, I think, that the British intent was not simply the partition but the utter fragmentation of India, and that, therefore, if we were to give way on the J&K question, we would give way on everything in the end, and India would simply disintegrate. But if we felt that way about it, we should never have brought the case to the United Nations at all. We should have relied on our own strength and our own capacity to defend what we took to be a territory of India. We should have relied upon that in order to solve the situation. We should not have asked for an international adjudication. When we did ask for an international adjudication, we found ourselves embroiled in matters of principle from which it was extremely difficult to retreat.

Gopal Swami Ayengar made his legal stand, and he made it pretty ably, but he lacked the social graces of a diplomat. He wasn't wonderfully good at cocktail parties. People in India began to feel that this was a brown man with a fine legal intelligence, but definitely not the chap

for the job, that we required someone else who was a bit more of a smoothy, and who could fix the thing a little bit better than Gopal Swami did. So Girga Shankar Bajpai, a much more polished person, who was certainly not lacking in the social graces, and who dined in the best places, drank the best wine, had been to Oxford, and liked literature, was sent out instead. And in the effort to smooth things out, we did in fact concede that the principle of self-determination, which had applied in the cases of Junagadh and Hyderabad, would also apply in the case of J&K. We did that, I think, partly because it was so very difficult for Nehru to understand that the people of J&K, given an opportunity to choose between India and Pakistan, might not choose India. It just seemed utterly incredible. The sensible thing to do was to join India which was a civilized, secular, tolerant, decent state instead of a theocratic dictatorship which Pakistan was. Why, therefore, if you were given an intelligent choice, would you not want to join India anyway? So it was agreed that the right of self-determination would, in fact, be exercised once the conditions had been laid for that right to be exercised, that is to say, once conditions of normalcy were restored in J&K.

The rest of that melancholy history you know. Conditions of normalcy were never restored. It has become increasingly apparent that if the right of self-determination is exercised in J&K, it may very well not be exercised in favour of India. It has also become more and more apparent that J&K is essential to the safeguarding of India's borders. We were extremely friendly with China at the time that the J&K case came to the United Nations. The border dispute with China had not arisen. India had repeatedly defended the right of the government in Peking to occupy that seat in the United Nations which, until the time of the Nixon Administration, was in fact occupied by the representative from Taiwan.

Other nations had argued that the Kuomintang was the proper representative of China in the United Nations. India and the Soviet Union had consistently argued that it was the Peking government which had to occupy that seat. So our relationships with China had been friendly up to that point. When they changed, because of that border dispute, when Chinese friendship to India changed to hostility, and when China, as a result of that hostility became friendly to Pakistan, J&K became absolutely essential to the preservation of India's territorial integrity, and the right to self-determination, if it was ever to be exercised, would then have to be exercised as I suggested earlier, within the parameters of territorial integrity, also a concept which the United Nations Charter respects.

You can see that the history of India's behaviour in the United Nations has been dominated by this one mistaken reference, and that we have been obliged to retreat from a progressive, to a defensive, interpretation of the Charter; one in which territorial integrity, the limited scope of UN intervention and its exclusion from domestic affairs, become as important, or perhaps more important, than the liberal interpretation of those progressive provisions which are also embodied in the Charter.

I suppose that if one were to take a specific example of how our international behaviour has been dominated by the J&K problem and its aftermath, we might use Suez and Hungary as examples. If you have seen that series, *Dynasty*, on the Nehru succession as it were, one of the crucial episodes in it is the contrast between our behaviour when it came to Suez and our behaviour when it came to Hungary. It has been suggested that – in fact it is taken for granted by most interpreters – Suez and Hungary are parallel cases, and that we behaved one way when it came to Suez because the Western powers were involved and in another way when it came to

Hungary because Russia was involved. And that is because, despite all our professions of non-alignment, our “tilt”, as Kissinger puts it, has always been to the Soviet Union. There is a range of statistical evidence to this effect with which representatives of the United States have sometimes belaboured me: “On two occasions you voted for the U.S., on fifty-seven occasions you voted with the Soviet Union,” etc., etc. It was tempting to retort that the Soviet Union did happen to be right on fifty-seven occasions and the U.S. only on two, and the retort was probably nearer the truth than the United States would be prepared to admit. I do not want to exclude the fact that we did have a bit of a Russian tilt because I know that we did. But I feel that it is a somewhat mistaken procedure to think of Suez and Hungary as parallel cases.

The Suez case was a case in which a canal lying in Egyptian territory was expropriated by the Egyptian government, and as a result, an invasion of that territory took place, a joint invasion, by Britain, France and Israel, which was called off when the Russians eventually made it plain that if this intervention continued, Britain would feel the extent of Russia’s military power and would be much the sorrier as a result of feeling it. At that stage, the British delegation which had been very uppity, uppity, up to that point, suddenly realized that it had got itself into serious trouble, took advantage of the United Nations as a face-saving mechanism, and did a climb down to avoid what would otherwise have been a disaster for it.

In the case of Hungary, there was a popular uprising. The legally constituted government of Hungary – which happened not to be the government of the people, but simply the legal authority – sought the assistance of the Soviet Union with which it had an alliance and obtained that assistance. That is not parallel to the Egyptian case. The parallel, unfortunately, is to another case, and that is the J&K case. And that’s not the official reason, of course, but it is, as it

were, the sub-textual reason which made it impossible for the India Delegation to vote against the Russian intervention on that occasion.

Obviously India could not make a statement to that effect in the United Nations, but that was the thinking behind our abstention, the uncomfortable resemblance of the Hungarian case to the J&K case . It was not a case of tilting towards Russia. It was simply a case of worrying about ourselves and the application of that particular logic, to our own case if we had condemned the Russians.

There was another case in the United Nations history which is not well known at all and perhaps needs to be considered a little further. There was a territory under trusteeship known as Dutch New Guinea. It then came to be called West Irian. It was West Irian before it became Dutch New Guinea. When the question of its future arose after trusteeship was over, it was claimed by Indonesia as an integral part of the territory of Indonesia. Hardly anyone thought fit to raise any question of the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of West Irian. I think it may have been raised by the Dutch. But the Indonesian Delegation, at any rate, took the view that this territory was historically part of Indonesia, that that was the end of it, and that they were not interested in ascertaining the wishes of the people of that territory. In that view, they were supported not only by India, but by the entire Asian-African group, and in fact the future of West Irian was settled with no reference at all to the possible wishes of the people of West Irian. Indonesia simply took the territory.

Now again there is a parallel to the J&K case in that the right of the people – or rather the consultation of the wishes of the people – is not a matter of consequence, given the territorial integrity of Indonesia and given the historic fact that the territory once belonged to Indonesia.

Again it seems to me that the question of what the people wanted is not necessarily the foremost question. The case is interesting because of the acquiescence of all the people in the Asian-African group who simply followed Indonesia's wish that this should be so and agreed to set aside any question of consulting the wishes of the people of West Irian.

Now in cases like this, India has tended to side with legal authority, proper instruments of accession, historical rights, territorial integrity, self-determination -- if exercised at all, exercised only within the parameters of territorial integrity -- and has thus retreated from the far more, shall we say, liberal positions which it took, slowly going back into a defensive rather than progressive interpretation of the United Nations Charter. It has done so simply under the compulsion of events. It has done so because India has felt itself to be a threatened country. It has done so because there is a deep trauma associated with partition and the aftermath of partition because there is, in India, a persistent fear of India's fragmentation to which it finds itself unable to give way, and which it feels compelled to resist.

These are forces within the Indian collective psyche. They are forces which are the result of India's history, and they are forces which have finally led to our having to reposition ourselves as we have done. As I said, when you consider the Charter, you cannot simply consider it as an internally consistent document. You have to see it as in contention within itself. You have to subject it to the politics of reading, and the politics of reading will, in any given case, depend upon the history and the problems of the particular nation that does the reading, and therefore you cannot understand India's reading of the Charter and the way in which India has come to interpret it without putting it in the context of India's history, of India's fears, of the forces that threaten India, and of the things that matter most in the Indian concept of what India is and should remain.

Questions

Question:

Concerning your last comments about the lasting traumatic effect on India of the partition, we are a long time from that now. Lots and lots of people born in India were not witness to that. Is that going to be a lasting feature of Indian life, or is it something that will subside?

Answer:

It's 50 years ago, but I think that the forces of fragmentation in India still continue to trouble India. The British proposition always has been that India is simply a territorial concept, held together by imperial power, that India would disintegrate if a strong central presence didn't hold India together. The Mughal presence held India together. British imperial power succeeded the Mughal presence, and again held India together. Without a strong central presence, India would disintegrate because there really is nothing to hold together this collection of languages, peoples, religions and so forth.

The counterstatement to that has always been that there is some kind of deep unity to India. *The Discovery of India* is a book obsessed with the unity of India, and a great deal of the really moving eloquence of that book comes out of the almost symbolic concept of the precious stone set in the silver sea with the world's most formidable mountains on two sides of the diamond. The sea is on the other two sides of that diamond. This is a kind of protected space in which Indianness is to be achieved. It's joined together, not simply by geography, but by a deep symbolic bond. When the diamond was broken into two -- or three actually -- which is what happened at the time of partition, one felt, or at least the Indian psyche did feel an overwhelming act of violation taking place.

The counterstatement of Indian nationalism based itself on the fundamental togetherness of India. Partition split in two this fundamental togetherness and so in two ways. It divided India into a state which claimed to be organized on the basis of an inherent unity and into another state, which was organized on the basis of a religious difference. The cleavage was ideological as well as territorial. It constituted a deep threat to the concept of Indian unity.

Many of us grew up in that time with this thinking. You ask me, what people think to whom independence and the independence struggle are simply a historical memory? It's 50 years. If you're 49 years old or less then you never knew anything about any of this. You were in the womb when all of this happened, if you were even there, so why should it matter to you? In fact, the youth of India may think differently for all I know.

Participant: I think the fact of the matter is this. That every now and then something happens to trigger this basic fear in the psyche. For instance, for the last three years, Hindus have been either massacred or made to flee from J&K, from Jammu. Quite recently, two months back, there was a series of terrible bomb explosions in Coimbatore in Southern India, which a Muslim fundamentalist – I forget his name now – has taken credit for. And this keeps on, you see. You said that after 50 years, it's high time we should forget it. I agree. But we are not allowed to forget it. That is the tragedy of it.

Mr. Rajan: And then there is the Khalistan agitation. There is the Assamese agitation. And you do have the feeling that if a piece breaks off, another piece will break off, and that there is going to be a domino effect and the whole structure will come down.

Question:

I would think that the destroying of the mosque in Ayodhya also adds to the fact that sometimes it is difficult to come together, all those different cultures and religions. It surely is very difficult because you could either take the very Hindu fundamentalist way, or the Islamic fundamentalist way, and it is usually both sides which have to come together, I think.

Answer:

Yes, I think the tragedy of the whole situation is that India never wanted, and was not interested in, religious fundamentalism. One can disagree with Nehru on a number of points, but what he did say was that India was a multi-national, multi-linguistic, multi-religious kind of community. That we all came together, that we all spoke to each other, that we all lived with each other. That was part of what India was about. But I think the creation of Pakistan really drove a stake through that proposition by setting up a state on the ground of religious difference. Ever since

then it has become apparent, unfortunately, that religious difference does exercise a great deal of appeal, and the presence of a state on India's borders defining itself as a site of religious difference intensifies this feeling of religious separateness which would not have occurred to anything like the same extent had it been otherwise. We could all have lived within an undivided India, but the historical circumstances were such that there is a religiously organized state on the borders of India, a state with a population of somewhat over 150 million or thereabouts, and it is quite different in the way it is conceived from the kind of secular basis on which India is conceived.

Question:

I have a question about the psyche or the belief systems of foreign service officers in India in the late '60s. India tested a nuclear bomb in 1974 and by 1989, intermediate range ballistic missiles, so they have the capability to deliver nuclear weapons against Pakistan, and obviously Pakistan has them too. I'm wondering whether you could comment on why India pursued the nuclear option, beginning, I guess, in the late '60's. Did you see among your colleagues, certain kind of classic motives? Did they want a status symbol? Was their intent to actually possibly use them or did they think that they would be a good deterrent against, for example, Pakistan or China? Did you see anything of those certain motives?

Answer:

China exploded an atom bomb, and it then exploded a hydrogen bomb, and when it comes to intermediate and long range ballistic missiles, it has a fairly well developed technology which it has exported to other countries. India, I may say, has long been opposed to this idea of a nuclear club and has always argued that nuclear disarmament should be disarmament by everyone who possess significant quantities of nuclear weapons.

I did at one time represent India in the International Atomic Energy Agency, and this has always been a sticking point. A privileged position was sought by the members of the nuclear club who wanted to stop everyone else from accumulating nuclear technology, and who not only refused to dismantle, in any way or to any degree, the stockpiles of nuclear weapons which they

had, but actually insisted on adding aggressively to those stockpiles which they were doing during the entire period when the International Atomic Energy Agency was set up, in the late '50s.

Question:

The main thrust of your remarks this afternoon was to show how, in many ways, India's position in the UN and foreign policy, have reflected the contradiction within the Charter itself, so I go back to the national interest argument. While you were there, or in your contact with the people there, there were three events, and I would like to see you reflect upon them. One was the partition of Palestine. India's position was very consistent. They argued against that partition, which was basically the position India had, but the Congress Party had determined the foreign policy of India for most of its 50 years of independence and prior to that. So the Congress were opposed to partition in 1947 of India itself, as it was opposed to the partition of Palestine, quite rightly so, and the partition of Palestine and of India have parallel implications that the world has had to deal with and continues to deal with. That was one event.

The other event was Goa which also became an issue at the UN in some ways. And the third event was the very dramatic intervention by Mrs. Gandhi, in 1971 in the domestic affairs of Pakistan which had a spillover effect on India. India's position, in a sense, solved the problem in part but created, I would imagine, international implications.

So those are the three events.

Answer:

I think on the partition of Palestine we have been consistent. We had our own partition experience to go on. The idea that a national home should be created, that you should have in fact people immigrating from all over the world in order to create a country where no country had previously existed, and that that country should then occupy a certain portion of a territory which had been historically otherwise from the beginning was not something we could be expected to agree with. So I don't see that there's any particular inconsistency there. I think you might expect us, under the circumstances, having gone through partition ourselves, to be particularly

wary of the effects of partition as a political strategy or a means of securing political peace in other circumstances. The British obsession with partition is not simply in India, not simply in Ireland, not simply in Palestine. Let me quote another case which very few people will be familiar with.

When I was in the permanent Delegation of India to the UN, my Ambassador called me in one day and said, "There is a committee somewhere which is discussing something or other about Africa. You go see what it is and decide about it. I've got to have a lunch with the French Ambassador, so you go off." And I went in there. I found that, in fact, they were discussing the future of Eritrea. Now I had very little idea what Eritrea was and where it was and what it was about. I did realize that the Fourth Division of the Indian army had liberated Eritrea in the course of its various wanderings in the Middle East.

But I found that a fat report had been submitted upon the future of Eritrea, and that this fat report contained three options. One was the independence of Eritrea; the other was the union of Eritrea with Ethiopia, which was the solution eventually adopted; and the third was the partition of Eritrea which, of course, was the option enthusiastically supported by the British. It's their standard solution. It's their standard solution because I think it makes very good sense, when you are leaving a country, to leave it in as torn up a state as you possibly can.

Let's go back to the time when it became apparent that India was going to become independent. If I was sitting in the foreign office of England, and if I were writing a position paper on what ought to be done, since, of necessity, we had to give up India, I would have counselled the partition of India. I would have said that we have here the Indian National Congress. We have had a long and quite often unhappy relationship with the Indian National Congress. When they come into power, as a result of our leaving India, they are not going to like us at all. They will be unfriendly to us, and bearing that in mind, it would be a very good idea to have on the Indian sub-continent, the partitioned Indian sub-continent, another power which is more likely to be friendly to us because we have not quarrelled with them, because we have not put their principal leaders into prison.

Now here is Mr. Jinnah. We have not put any of Jinnah's people into prison. Jinnah should be very grateful to us, that we are going to give him a whole country just like that, and

that will help us to achieve a balance of power in India with a friendly Mr. Jinnah against a hostile Mr. Nehru who will hate our guts because of the fact that we put Nehru in prison several times, we put Gandhi in prison several times, we put Patel in prison several times, we put Indira Gandhi in prison as well. How on earth can we expect any friendship from these people?

Now that would have seemed to us to be a rational calculation but of course it didn't work in that way at all. I would have recommended it if I'd been in the British Foreign Office. Somebody like me obviously recommended it to the British Foreign Office. But what happened? The Congress leaned over backwards in order to be friendly with the British, and Pakistan made its peace with America, not with England. It realized that America was the coming power in the future. It climbed on the American bandwagon nice and early so as to get all the advantages of doing so.

Question:

I wonder if the British could have contained the forces of disintegration in India? Could they have really turned over an intact country? Was that within their power militarily? I don't know the answer.

Answer:

I think that it's terribly difficult to rewrite history hypothetically in that way. I think a great deal of this feeling was built up by the British and courted by the British. If you look at the cricket matches in India, there were Muslims on the one side, Hindus on the other side. The communal organization of even things like that shows the extent to which the British did follow a policy of divide and rule. On the other hand, I don't think you can honestly say that there were no fissiparous forces in India at all, that everything would have been hunky-dory if the British hadn't stirred it up because I think there was something there for the British to stir up in the first place. But if you tried to keep the thing down, I don't think the problem would have assumed anything like the dimensions which it did eventually assume.

Question:

In your opinion, the liberation of Goa in 1961, was it borne out of the fear of fragmentation or was it a political statement against colonialism?

Answer:

On the liberation of Goa, I think that among other things, it was an extreme irritation that the Portuguese should still be hanging on when everyone had surrendered gracefully. Goa was also being used for smuggling right and left. The people of Goa were prospering exceedingly on this illicit trade and of course the neighbouring Indian economy was being weakened by the fact that so much stuff was coming in through Goa.

Question:

I'd like your ideas on what Professor Mansur said, in 1971 when India did interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan which resulted in the liberation of Bangladesh. That is somewhat the same as Pakistan interfering in Kashmir, in Jammu and Kashmir. And hence we see the two different contradictory positions of India. I would like your opinions on that, please.

Answer:

I think the reason provided for the Indian incursion into Bangladesh and the liberation of Bangladesh, incidentally, was the intolerable dimension of the refugee movement into India. Millions of people fled from Bangladesh into India and produced a very, very heavy strain upon the resources of West Bengal. I think India felt it could not put up with this kind of pressure, that some means had to be found of reducing the refugee influx into India from what was then part of the territory of Pakistan. Then there was the fact, of course, that in fact Bangladesh had a majority, if I remember rightly, in the Pakistan legislative assembly. The Bangladesh votes which were all controlled by one group would have outweighed the other votes in the Pakistan Assembly. They would, in fact, have become the government of Pakistan. This situation was intolerable to Pakistan and Pakistan, therefore, exercised its military authority over Bangladesh and refused to allow it the full extent of participation in the government of Pakistan.

But, of course, you come to the usual paradox. In this case, the Bangladesh people exercised a right of self-determination which, as you imply, was assisted by India just as Kashmir was assisted by Pakistan in achieving its right to expressing its popular feeling against the reigning Maharaja, and the two situations are not without parallels. I think in this case the practical problem was that if we did not arrive at some kind of settlement of the Bangladesh problem, the refugee drain from Bangladesh into India would have continued and would have become quite impossible to support. If we achieved the settlement of the Bangladesh problem and the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan, that particular problem would have ceased. I'm not saying that it was the only thing on our minds when we went in there.

I suppose the thing that was also on our minds was that there was a great deal of popular discontent with Pakistan arising at that moment in Bangladesh, that if we went to the assistance of the people of Bangladesh we would be supported and well received and that this was a chance to separate one half of Pakistan from the other. These things, as you know, are not decided by principle.

Question:

You brought up the case of Eritrean partition. They ultimately fought a 30 year war of self-determination. Don't you feel that if there had been a partition and a separate state had been created, then it could have saved them 35 years in their development as a nation?

Answer:

What was proposed was the partition of Eritrea itself. The three solutions were: that it should remain independent, that it should be united with Ethiopia, or that Eritrea itself should be partitioned and that, if you consider it, was a silly solution because Eritrea is barely a self-sufficient unit in toto, and if you divide it into two, neither part of it would be capable of sustaining itself. Eritrea should have been given its independence but the U.N. report favoured union with Ethiopia and the African nations in the Asian African group were not convinced that this was the wrong solution.

Question:

The interesting thing about the issue, the way you phrased the remarks on partition, that it's the obsession of the British to leave behind partition situations. The interesting historical observation is that, at the word of its departure, or in a situation of crisis that eventually precipitated the partition proposed – in Palestine it was the UN, in India it was Britain itself – Britain had profound second thoughts in the case of the partition of Palestine. Britain backed off from the Balfour Declaration with the White Paper of 1939 and completely repudiated that entire exercise. In the case of India, the papers of Mountbatten, to the extent that I'm familiar with, show how Mountbatten reflected that if he and the entourage had known what was ailing Mr. Jinnah, the situation might have been pushed. He participated with a June declaration to pull the date forward, whereas the Cabinet Commission Plan wanted it for 1948, and Mr. Jinnah died in 1948, so perhaps there would have been no partition of India. That's one possibility. The other possibility is that the best estimate of the British government in India from its security forces was that the army would stand together despite threats of mutiny, and it might have prevailed over forces of disintegration as it did during the time leading up to the partition. It will be one of those big "if" questions that if Mr. Nehru had not agreed to partition and had gone along with Mr. Azad's position. You did not comment on Azad's position.

Professor Rajan: What was Azad's position?

Participant: Azad's position was against partition, and the subsequent edition of his book that came out 30 years after his death suggested that it was Mr. Jinnah who argued against Azad's position. Mr. Gandhi's position also was that we should hang on, we should not allow this partition to go through.

Answer:

Gandhi was not in favour of it. Rajagopalachari was not in favour of it. Azad was not in favour of it. Patel was not in favour of it. It still went through. Why? In that series, *Dynasty*, one of the proposals which I was unfamiliar with was that there should be a federation of various states in India, and that the Muslim League and the Congress should share power in governing that federation. Nehru was supposed to have dismissed that proposal as unworkable and impossible.

Why? Would it have been such a terrible thing for power to be shared over a united India.

Question:

Would it have been terrible in your view?

Answer:

I don't think that it would have been such a terrible thing.

Question:

It wouldn't have been terrible?

Answer:

No, it wouldn't have been terrible. It seems to me that Nehru's reluctance to share power was an important feature in rejecting that proposal. In effect, he was saying he would rather have undisputed power over three-quarters of India, or two-thirds of India than share power over the whole of India. It would have been better in retrospect, and of course we always speak in retrospect, it would have been better to share power over the whole of India.