

Socio-Political Trends in Southern Asia

Security Implications for India

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The Question

What is security? Does it connote only the security of borders? Or, does it encompass the entire gamut of possibilities that may endanger societal harmony and political stability paving the way for the enemies and rivals of the nation to fish in troubled waters? Does not security also mean preparedness of a nation to face challenges that national and international developments may throw up from time to time? From the perspective of this broad framework of security, the next set of questions that inevitably arises is: Do socio-political trends of a region affect that comprehensive 'security' which is in question here? If so, what should be one's time frame of analysis? And, still more importantly, how much predictability can be regarded as credible? This paper is a modest attempt to speculate on the socio-political trends of the Southern Asian region during the next two decades and relate them to the question of regional security, which itself constantly impinges on those trends. However, before the exercise is undertaken, a few broad clarifications are imperative so as to prevent the subject from losing its focus.

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Whose Security? What Security?

Post-modernist thought, which has influenced all social science fields, has not spared security studies. Its greatest impact is noticed in the very concept of national security, the core of the discipline of International Relations (IR). National security no longer merely connotes defence of the frontiers from external threats. It also incorporates the challenges posed to the well being of its nationals from such seemingly distant and indirect forces like environmental degradation, food shortages, desertification, deforestation, demographic changes, etc. Security discourse has thus become extremely complex. In short, therefore, unlike the ‘conventionalists’ who view security primarily from the military angle and treat it from threat perspectives—threats arising either externally or internally,¹ postmodernists see the sources of the threats not merely in military terms. They find their epicenters in the environment, demography, health, ecology, economics, culture and society.² For example, Samuel Huntington does not see the future threat to the United States emanating from any particular country or region, but from a religious belief system, which is globally present without having a centralized leadership or a definite pattern of assault.³

In the same framework of analysis, the concept of international border too has been subjected to reinterpretation. Throughout history, borders have played the most crucial role in building the security-centric mentality of nations. They are the markers of the state system – the latter’s authority and control over the spatial domain. Lately, however, ironically though, violations of borders through illegal migration have reinforced the concept.⁴ In

¹ For example, see J.S. Nye and S.M. Lynn-Jones, “International Security Studies: A Report of the Conference on the State of the Field,” *International Security*, Cambridge, Mass., vol. 12, no. 4, 1988, pp. 5-27.

² Richard H. Ullman, “Redefining Security,” *International Security*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1983, pp. 129-53.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New Delhi: Viking, 1996.

⁴ Ranabir Samaddar, “Borders, Anxieties about Borders and All That,” paper presented at the International Conference on ‘Cooperation in South Asia: Resolution of Inter-State Conflicts’, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, March 29-30, 1999, p. 3. Samaddar has developed the idea in greater detail in his book. See Samaddar, *The Marginal Nation: Transborder*

juxtaposition, there has also been a growing debate about the viability of borders. Depending upon one's disciplinary orientation, it is viewed differently. Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel see national borders as 'political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power'. Although in maps they appear in precise forms, their practical consequences are not precise. They write:

No matter how clearly borders are drawn on official maps, how many customs officials are appointed, or how many watchtowers are built, people will ignore borders whenever it suits them. In doing so, they challenge the political *status quo* of which borders are the ultimate symbol. People also take advantage of borders in ways that are not intended or anticipated by their creators. Revolutionaries hide behind them, seeking the protection of another sovereignty; local inhabitants cross them whenever services or products are cheaper or more attractive on the other side; and traders are quick to take advantage of price and tax differentials. Because of such unintended and often subversive consequences, border regions have their own social dynamics and historical development.⁵

Even within the nation state framework, there can be a variety of outlooks. To quote Baud and Schendel once again:

The interests of the armed forces, bureaucrats, politicians, landowners, traders, captains of industry often diverged. Whether or not this "national" struggle continued after the border had been created depended on the cohesion of the state, the strategic and economic importance of the border, and the actual presence of the state in the borderland. State employees stationed in the borderland and their superiors in the provincial or state capitals could develop very different perspectives on

Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal, New Delhi: Sage, 1999. Also see Barun De, "Moving Beyond Boundaries: Contradictions between People and Territory," in Tapan Bose and Rita Manchanda, eds., *States, Citizens and Outsiders: The Uprooted Peoples of South Asia*, Kathmandu: South Asia Forum for Human Rights, 1997, pp. 14-39.

⁵ Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History*, Honolulu, vol. 8, no. 2, 1997, pp. 211-2. See also, Paula Banerjee, "Borders as Unsettled Markers in South Asia: A Case Study of the Sino-Indian Border," *International Studies*, New Delhi, vol. 35, no. 2, 1998, pp. 179-91.

their mission in the borderland. Customs officials might become involved in smuggling, school-teachers might resist assimilatory language policy, and security forces might refuse to risk their lives against well-armed separatists.⁶

Why ‘Southern Asia’, and not ‘South Asia’?

The common geographical expression used by strategic analysts is ‘South Asia’, a definition that has been accepted by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The countries that comprise SAARC are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. But, for historical as well as futuristic reasons it would be more appropriate to understand the region in a slightly broader frame encompassing the region from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east, and from Southern China in the north to Sri Lanka in the south. Since Southern Asia as a strategic zone emerged during the British days, our rationale is not altogether novel. Historically, while the northwestern extent of the Indian empires during the Mauryas, and later during the Mughals, incorporated Afghanistan, the northeastern extent of the British Indian Empire incorporated the present Myanmar till the mid-1930s. Although the creation of Pakistan has severed the physical link between India and Afghanistan, the historical linkage between the two has made the Indian psyche view the latter as one of its strategic backyards. The cross-national ethno-linguistic similarities amongst the peoples living in the bordering regions also justify the claim of Southern Asia, not merely South Asia, to be considered as a strategic unit. To this territory-centric understanding of security one must as well add the oceanic dimension, but for the purposes of the present paper, that has not been brought within our purview.

⁶ Baud and Schendel, p. 217.

Rationalizing the Time Frame

There are inherent problems in identifying the time frame for a futuristic analysis of national security. Such threats as environmental, ecological or climatic take centuries or at least many decades to manifest. For example, the changes in the riverine courses can take centuries to make their impact felt on commerce, demography, forestation, etc., all of which have a serious influence on security.⁷ While an understanding of these changes is relevant for policy makers, their inclination and effectiveness to influence these processes is very limited. Insofar as demographic patterns, youth bulge, economic development, etc. are concerned, they are somewhat predictable in decadal terms. Then there are also some cultural and philosophical problems. For example, time itself has a cultural connotation. A few decades ago, in a juvenile delinquency case, a member of an American jury talked of the necessity of redefining generation in terms of five-years, and not twenty, given the fast pace in which American society was moving. The unprecedented growth of technology has indeed compelled us to revise some of our own notions of time in relation to societal changes. In any case, oriental societies are known to move slowly compared to the occident. There is yet another problem. Every generation, everywhere, thinks that its difficulties are unique and that the world before it is falling apart, to which the present generation is merely a helpless witness. Philosophers call it 'epochal egoism'.⁸

Without going further into this inherent, and evidently insurmountable, problem of reaching an agreement on a universally acceptable time frame for analysis, let us settle for a twenty-year time frame. This seems reasonable for our purpose here though all futuristic data do not go that far, nor do politicians

⁷ The drastic change in the course of the Ganga river during the second millennium had much to do with the peopling of Bengal and its conversion to Islam. See Richard Eaton, "Who are the Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal," in Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke, eds., *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations, and Meanings*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁸ A casual browse into the 1960s files of the *Economic Weekly /Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai) about the then problems of India and their comparison with the present would substantiate the point.

and policy planners have the patience, or even necessity, to wait that long.

Limits of Predictability in Social Science

A constant challenge for a social scientist is his intrinsic weakness vis-à-vis his natural science counterpart. While the natural scientist can find the provable explanation of a cause-effect phenomenon, which makes his tool scientific, a social scientist cannot necessarily boast of any such tool. Still, the gap between them is narrowing. Science is predicative only insofar as inanimate objects are concerned. When it confronts humans, whether in the field of medicine or in respect of such physical phenomena as hot or cold, likable or unlikable, tasteful or tasteless, and so on, it falters as much as social science. Since the universe of social scientists comprises only humans in their social as well as natural surroundings, the latter consisting of both inanimate and animate objects, the tools of social scientists are bound to be less predictive. Yet, with the advancement in methodological training and increasing access to all kinds of data on social development, social scientists have also become predictive. The thriving consultancy industry manned by sociologists, psychologists and other behavioral scientists prove the point even to the skeptics. Indeed, social science does not predict dates of future happenings, but it does predict trends, and sometimes even the inevitabilities.

The Social Scene

There can be several parameters under which the regional social scene can be studied, namely, development index, demography, religion, ethnicity, urbanization, literacy and education, population movements, violence, consumption patterns, entertainment industry, and so on. But none of them can individually tell us something meaningful. To make the information relevant, several of the factors, if not all, are to be qualitatively analysed. But to do so, an empirical database is necessary.

Development Index: As per the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI), of the 175 countries listed, all the countries under review here fall in the bottom half of the list. Barring China, Maldives and Sri Lanka, which have a slightly better record, the remaining (except Afghanistan for which there is no information) fall almost within the bottom one-third (see Table 1).

Table 1: HDI of Southern Asia

Country	Human Development Index
Maldives	86
Sri Lanka	99
China	104
India	127
Myanmar	131
Bhutan	136
Bangladesh	139
Nepal	143
Pakistan	144
Afghanistan	Not available

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 250-53.

Demography: Southern Asia is the most populous region in the world. The total population of the region in 2001 was 1441 million (excluding southern China, the data for which have not been separately computed). If the population of China were added, it could be about 2.7 billion, almost half of the world's population (see Table 2).

Table 2: Population of Southern Asia

Country	Total Population (in millions)			Population under 15 (%)	
	1975	2001	2015	2001	2015
Afghanistan*	23.5 (1995)	26.7 (2000)	41.6 (2025)	42.0 (1991)	37.0 (2025)
Bangladesh	75.2	140.9	181.4	38.8	31.9
Bhutan	1.2	2.1	3.0	42.3	37.8
India	620.7	1,033.4	1,246.4	33.7	27.7
Maldives	0.1	0.3	0.4	43.4	39.6
Myanmar	30.2	48.2	55.8	32.7	26.8
Nepal	13.4	24.1	32.0	40.5	35.6
Pakistan	70.3	146.3	204.5	41.8	38.1
Sri Lanka	13.5	18.8	20.6	25.5	21.3

Country	Population 65 & above (%)		Urban Population (as % of total)	
	2001	2015	2001	2015
Afghanistan*	2.8 (1991)	4.0 (2025)	20 (1995)	
Bangladesh	3.2	3.8	25.5	34.4
Bhutan	4.3	4.5	7.4	11.6
India	5.0	6.3	27.9	32.2
Maldives	3.3	3.1	28	35.2
Myanmar	4.6	5.9	28.2	36.7
Nepal	3.7	4.2	12.2	17.9
Pakistan	3.7	4.0	33.4	39.5
Sri Lanka	6.8	9.3	23.1	29.9

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 250-53.

* Source for Afghanistan: Asian Development Bank, *Health Sector Reform in Asia and the Pacific: Options for Developing Countries* (Manila, 1999), Appendix 147.

From the above table it would be seen that the growth rates of the countries are not uniform. For example, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the two other populous countries of the region, would grow at a faster rate than India and China. This has

security implications for the region, which we would discuss later. In the meantime, Table 3 would suffice to emphasise the point.

Table 3: Population Growth Rate

Country	Annual Population Growth Rate	
	1975-2001	2001-2015
Afghanistan*	2.8 (1991-2000)	
Bangladesh	2.4	1.8
Bhutan	2.3	2.6
China	1.6	0.6
India	2.0	1.3
Maldives	3.0	2.9
Myanmar	1.8	1.0
Nepal	2.4	2.0
Pakistan	2.8	2.4
Sri Lanka	1.3	0.7

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 250-53.

Source for Afghanistan: Asian Development Bank, *Health Sector Reform in Asia and the Pacific: Options for Developing Countries* (Manila, 1999), Appendix 147.

Religious Composition: Of the ten countries under survey, two are predominantly Hindu, namely, India and Nepal; four are predominantly Muslim, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Pakistan; three are predominantly Buddhist, namely, Bhutan (Mahayana Buddhism), Myanmar (Mahayana Buddhism) and Sri Lanka (Theravada Buddhism); and China is a mix of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. India has a large Muslim minority constituting almost 14 per cent of the population and the same is the case with Bangladesh having a large Hindu minority constituting approximately 10 per cent of its population. But while the actual numbers of Indian Muslims as well as their proportion to the population are increasing, those of the Bangladeshi Hindus are systematically declining. Given the fact that during the period 1900-1990, the Muslim population of South Asia has increased from 24.5 per cent to 28 per cent of the

population, while the Hindu population together with other India-born religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism has declined from 74.5 per cent to 69 per cent of South Asia's population,⁹ and given also the fact that this period has witnessed the worst polarization of Hindu-Muslim politics leading not only to the dismemberment of India but also frequent Hindu-Muslim riots, this religious demographic variable needs careful reflection.

Against the background of the militant assertion by some sections of hardcore Islamist groups, it calls for emphasis that Southern Asia hosts the largest number of Muslims in the world compared to any other region. They number about 450 million. Except a small proportion of them who live in Afghanistan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka, almost the entire community is shared between Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, in that order. Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country in the world after Indonesia, a position earlier held by Bangladesh. Ironically, however, global Muslim politics is dictated by events in West Asia, more particularly, the Arab world.¹⁰

The Political Scene

In Southern Asia, as everywhere else, nation building essentially boils down to territorial integrity. How to ensure this is the greatest challenge for all governments. There are two paths to this, one by enlisting the support of major powers, both in the neighbourhood as well as on the global scene, and the other by working out such a political development strategy that would prevent the marginalization of any community to the extent of its asking for secession. In Southern Asia, so far only Pakistan has disintegrated. The reason was that the Pakistani state could

⁹ A.P. Joshi, M.D. Srinivas and J.K. Bajaj, *Religious Demography of India*, Chennai: Centre for Policy Studies, 2003, p. 145.

¹⁰ I have tried to explain this phenomenon elsewhere. See Partha S. Ghosh, "Towards a Better Understanding of Indian Islam," in Japan Foundation, *Status of Islamic Studies in India: An Overview*, New Delhi: Japan Foundation, 2003, pp. 1-18. For a critical rejoinder to the article, see Syed Shahabuddin, "Open Letter to Dr. Partha S. Ghosh: Understanding Islam in the Modern World," *The Milli Gazette*, New Delhi, January 1-15, 2004. Also see, Partha S. Ghosh, "Intellectuals Analyse, Extremists Penalise: Limits of Textural Explorations," in Japan Foundation, *Islam in Contemporary World: Some Indian Perspectives*, New Delhi: Japan Foundation, 2004, pp. 1-14.

neither manage domestic disaffection nor external danger. On the one hand, there was the massive East Pakistani rebellion against West Pakistani highhandedness, and on the other, there was a hostile India willing to take advantage of Pakistan's predicament. The fact that no other country has experienced dismemberment does not mean that they all have done very well and have reasons to be complacent. All nations in the region display symptoms of societal disharmony, which if not contained at the appropriate time, can lead to insurmountable integration crises in the future. As far as India is concerned, the problem can emerge primarily from three directions – communal, Centre-State divergence, and intra-State and inter-State disparities. So far as the communal question is concerned, it has to be viewed from a larger perspective of ascendancy of religion as a political force in almost the entire region.

It is speculated that religion, ethnicity and caste would play an increasing role in the politics of the region. Southern Asia being both pluralistic and poor provides a fertile ground for this undesirable development. Still, what is expected to happen is not the type of clash of civilizations that Huntington talks about but something like civil wars within civilizations that Joseph Nye has recently articulated.¹¹ From the trend of politics in recent times in at least three countries of the region, namely, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, it can be seen that, although in all these countries there is an unprecedented ascendancy of religious politics, the forces opposed to it are also strong.¹² This so-called civil war type situation, however, would have its own hazards, often impelling the state to behave in a partisan manner, thereby hitting at the very roots of rule of law.

This brings us to the fundamental question about the sanctity of political institutions. So long as the institutions of governance are above sectarian motivations, all communities repose faith in them. The rules of the political game are well known and

¹¹ See, for instance, Joseph S. Nye, *Soft-Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

¹² For more on this point, see Partha S. Ghosh, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to the Centre*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1999, and 'South Asian Muslims, Nine Eleven and Americanism: A Reflective Analysis,' an unpublished paper.

everybody knows his limits. But sectarian politics by definition has the potential to destroy this fabric. The problem is compounded in the Indian type of federalism, which sometimes is too federal although the classical literature on federalism would not take note of that. Let us take two examples. First, most of the political parties are not federal, and second, political idioms are generally national but politics is local. Together, these phenomena can cause serious problems, as we would see below.

One of the best examples of federalism is the United States. The political parties there are federal as a result of which, although States have their distinct identities, on matters of national concern there is seldom any serious divergence between the States and the Federal Government. India presents just the opposite picture. Here, apparently the Central Government is all-powerful and the Governor is supposed to be the watchdog of central interests. But on the crucial question of law and order, the Central Government is virtually powerless even when larger constitutional commitments are in question. To cite an example, although the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were ready in shining armour on December 6, 1992, the day the Babri mosque was demolished, they could not save the structure despite the Central Government's commitment thereto. The assistance of the CRPF can be requisitioned only by the State Government, which the then Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in Uttar Pradesh (UP) did not opt for. As a result, under the nose of a huge contingent of CRPF personnel, the mosque was reduced to rubble. The question of police omissions or prejudiced commissions during communal riots, in some of which the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) of UP and the Bihar Military Police (BMP) have earned notoriety, is a part and parcel of the same malaise. With the decline of single party rule at the Centre and its replacement by coalition Governments, this tendency is going to be enduring.

Growing regionalism, which would inevitably lead to sub-regionalism in due course, would wreak havoc in the peripheral regions of the country like Kashmir and the North East. The disparity amongst the regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, in the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), in terms of development

aid and investment has often led to acrimony and to demands for the trifurcation of the State into three units.

The Northeast provides a peculiar amalgam of centrifugal and centripetal forces, which creates political complexities of which the growth of insurgency is just one symptom. While the 6th Schedule of the Constitution deals with the tribal areas, the Panchayat System (73rd Amendment) deals with the non-tribal areas. But Arunachal Pradesh, though tribal, is not covered by the 6th Schedule. (It was the North East Frontier Area (NEFA) during the British era. On August 15, 1947, when India became an independent nation, NEFA became an integral part of the Union of India. It was administered by the External Affairs Ministry with the Governor of Assam acting as agent to the President of India. In 1972, NEFA became a Union Territory and it was named as Arunachal Pradesh. In 1987, statehood was conferred on it.)

Administrative complexities and contradictions also characterise the order of local governance in other States in the Northeast, which are highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4: Local Government Structure in the North East

State	Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) /6 th Schedule/None
Assam	Both PRI and 6 th Schedule
Arunachal Pradesh	Only PRI
Manipur	Only PRI (some ADCs under V Schedule)
Meghalaya	Only 6 th Schedule
Mizoram	Only 6 th Schedule
Tripura	Both PRI and 6 th Schedule
Sikkim	Only PRI
Nagaland	None, Village Development Boards

Communalism and its Security Connection

The communal scenario in India, though not so depressing at the moment, is still a matter of concern. The Gujarat anti-Muslim violence of early 2002 is a pointer to the fact that the situation could go out of control at any time, particularly if the Government is not determined to prevent this from happening. That communal riots have their inevitable fallout on internal security is empirically testable. The destruction of the Babri mosque led to riots in Mumbai, which were soon followed by serial bomb blasts that rocked the city. The bomb attacks on the Gateway of India in Mumbai in early 2004 by some ordinary Muslims confounded academics and perceptive policy practitioners, confirming their worst fears that, once the psyche of a particular community is bruised by intermittent violence unleashed on them, it is a matter of time before they organise themselves to take up arms against the state which has been considered as partisan. Political psychologist Ashis Nandy may one day be proved prophetic for his statement that “majority actions are bound to provoke reaction. For instance, Christians were attacked in the Dang and other places in Gujarat in the recent past. A few years down the line, you may see them regroup and organise themselves as Christian terrorists.”¹³ The former Mumbai Police chief, Julio Ribeiro, expressed a similar anxiety after visiting camps in Ahmedabad where the Muslim victims of the 2002 Gujarat riots were sheltered. He wrote:

I visited the Shah Alam camp where nearly 10,000 Muslims had been accommodated after their homes were burnt and looted and their relatives raped and killed. I had expected histrionics and wailing but I was astounded at the matter of fact manner in which young boys and girls recounted the sordid details of what they had seen and experienced. It gave me an uneasy feeling that these young people were not going to forget the injustices heaped on them. I do not know if the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, who had been gloating over their ‘success’ in Gujarat, visualised the danger to which they are

¹³ Ranjith Bhushan, “A Dangerous Symbiosis”, *Outlook*, New Delhi, April 1, 2002, p. 22.

exposing their innocent co-religionists somewhere, sometime in the future.¹⁴

There is evidence that the BJP, which emerged as a centre-stage party and is going to remain so in the foreseeable future, has not given up its Hindutva agenda. Under the cover of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government it merely put this agenda on the back burner, allowing it to smoulder for the appropriate time to stoke the flames. Even when the slogans of the party for the 2004 parliamentary elections were 'India Shining' and 'Feel Good', thereby highlighting the development agenda of the NDA under Atal Behari Vajpayee's leadership, the BJP did not fail to remind the electorate that the party still attached priority to the abolition of Article 370 and the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya, both of which had significant pro-Hindutva overtones.¹⁵ After the defeat of the BJP at the polls, the party has unequivocally returned to its Hindutva plank. It is relevant to mention that, in spite of systematic improvement in Indo-American relations during the NDA rule, in the reckoning of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which submits its report to the US President, the Secretary of State and the Congress for possible policy action, India figured as one of the 'countries of particular concern (CPC)' where there is 'systematic, ongoing, and egregious violation of religious freedom that the Governments are responsible for or have tolerated.' Of the 11 countries designated as CPC, three were from Southern Asia, namely, India, Pakistan and Myanmar.¹⁶ It is common knowledge that, given the religious make up of the region and cross-cultural linkages, communal flare-ups in any part of the region have ripple effects on other parts, which have the potential to turn terrorist in due course of time.

¹⁴ Julio Ribeiro, "Lost Middle Ground: A Community Loses Hope in Gujarat," *The Times of India*, New Delhi, April 24, 2002.

¹⁵ BJP President Venkaiah Naidu's statement on February 18, 2004, at a public rally in Srinagar. See *The Sentinel*, Guwahati, February 19, 2004.

¹⁶ For details, see Bibek Debroy, "Slightly Tarnished: Not all Reports from the US Proclaim that India is Shining," *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, February 19, 2004.

The Two Indias

The socio-economic development of India, which has inevitable impact on national politics, is creating two Indias – one developing fast and the other languishing. One important reason for this dichotomy is the differentiated achievement on the family planning front. While some States like Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have reached or are near the replacement level, the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, which account for nearly 40 per cent of the country's population, had in 1991 total fertility rates between 4.5 and 5.2. As per projections, by 2016, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal would also attain the replacement level. But Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh would reach the replacement level only after 2050.¹⁷ These inter-State differentials in the growth rates of population could have serious political implications because less developed regions would have larger representation in the Parliament at the cost of the developed regions. No wonder that Tamil Nadu's K. Karunanidhi was up in arms against any move to delimit the parliamentary constituencies, which ultimately forced the Vajpayee Government to agree that, till 2020, no delimitation would be attempted. But the fact of the matter is that the issue is a veritable time bomb, which would explode the moment the question is raked up.

In terms of economic achievement also there are two Indias: While Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu are growing fast as their Economic and Social Infrastructure Indexes suggest, the entire Hindi-speaking belt as well as the entire North East is lagging behind. The remaining States have a mixed record. According to Omkar Goswami, Chief Economist of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the States having the best investment climate are Maharashtra and Gujarat, while the States having good investment climate are Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Interestingly, during the last five years these States have

¹⁷ Leela Visaria and Pravin Visaria, eds., *Prospective Population Growth and Policy Options for India 1991-2101*, New York: The Population Council, 1996, p. 4, and UNFPA, *Towards Population and Development Goals*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 39.

been ruled by five different political parties, yet all of them retained an almost total commitment to privatisation and economic reforms.¹⁸

The phenomenon of two Indias has the most telling expression in the rural-urban divide of the country. As the economy gets more and more polarised, the rate of migration of the rural poor to urban centres is bound to accelerate causing all kinds of urban tensions. Urbanisation *per se* is indicative of political development, but that kind of urbanisation connotes transformation of rural societies into urban centres on account of economic and social developments. The rural migration-fed urban growth, however, brings in its train societal tensions such as crime and inter-communal disharmony. Since sizeable proportions of these rural migrations are into the urban areas of other States, the 'sons of the soil' syndrome is the natural fallout, with its attendant disintegrative tendencies. The anti-Bihari violence in Assam in 2003 is just a pointer of things to come. In Mumbai, the Shiv Sena polemics against outsiders erupt every now and then. Demographic studies suggest that, with the growth of population, there would be progressive subdivision of familial landholdings resulting in lack of opportunities for rural folk. Watching the trends during the period 1971-1992, it can be estimated that the number of rural households with less than 2.5 acres of land will increase to approximately 87 per cent by 2012.¹⁹ The trend is indicative of an increase in the number of households without land and 'casualisation' of the workforce, in both on-farm and off-farm employment.

The Technology Imperative

There is yet another way of visualizing the two Indias, and that is from the perspective of technology. There is a technology gap between rural and urban India on the one hand, and between political India and corporate India on the other. In spite of the hype about taking computers to the villages, the reality is quite

¹⁸ Omkar Goswami, 'India 2003-2010: Economic and Political Scenarios,' power point presentation printout, August 2003.

¹⁹ Visaria and Visaria, *Prospective Population Growth*, p. 10.

different. In 2002, four major cities accounted for 53 per cent of all the computers sold in India. The next 12 per cent was purchased in another four cities. That means eight cities accounted for 65 per cent of all PCs sold while the rest of India purchased the remaining 35 per cent. Since 650 million people live in rural India one can imagine how little the villages contributed to these sales.²⁰ One must not lose sight of the fact that, since the power situation in the rural areas is dismal, this situation has yet another explanation.

There is a strange paradox in the country: corporate India, in which all political parties have virtually reposed their trust (including the Marxists in Bengal), is technology savvy and willing to play ball with its global competitors; but politics is still dictated by caste, communal and familial considerations. This mismatch can result in a serious communication gap between the two segments, causing a policy hotchpotch. Since, in India, the Members of Parliament have no system of maintaining their own research units, it would be increasingly problematic for them to grapple with the highly complex realities of the modern age. The phenomenon of globalization has, indeed, reduced the role of the state as a producer of goods and services, but it has enhanced the role of the state as a regulator and facilitator. More market should not mean less Government but different Government.²¹ Can the Indian political class, which is still tuned to the old time political cacophony, measure up to the new challenges thrown up by this 'different state'?

The Youth Bulge

In trying to explain the two serious insurgent challenges to the Sri Lankan state, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front)-led insurgency in 1971 and the Tamil insurgency in the 1980s, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States argued that both coincided exactly with the years when the 15-24 'youth bulge' in those communities

²⁰ Data culled from the power-point printout of Shubhashis Gangopadhyay, India Development Foundation, December 15, 2003.

²¹ C. Rangarajan, 'State and Market—Scope and Limits,' Fourth Dr. C.D. Deshmukh Memorial Lecture 2001, Hyderabad, p. 13.

exceeded 20 per cent of the total population of the community.²² If the same model is followed, it is advisable for India to watch out. According to projections, the total labour force aged 15 and above is likely to rise from 354 million in 1991 to 627 million by 2021 and to 692 million by 2031.²³ Since it is unlikely that the Indian economy would be able to absorb this huge labour force in the next two decades because of factors that we discuss below, widespread youth unrest can be expected. How virulent those unrests would be is difficult to predict, but given the demographic scenario, it is likely that these would be more acute in less developed areas, many of which are in the border regions.

It would be instructive to underline the fact that, out of the 28 States that constitute the Indian Union, 17 have international borders: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The States, which do not have international borders, are only Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. Out of the 17 border-abutting States, as many as eight are in India's Northeast, which means the entire north-eastern region calls for special attention, particularly because all kind of ethnicity-related insurgencies are already in action, some of which secure support and safe-haven in neighbouring countries.

The North East

The economy of India's Northeast is agrarian in character. However agriculture is still in its traditional form with labour intensive methods and low capital investment. The primary sector – comprising agriculture and mining and quarrying – contributed almost 35 per cent of the total Net State Domestic Product

²² Gary Fuller, "The Demographic Backdrop to Ethnic Conflict: A Geographic Overview," in *The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict to National and International Order in the 1990s: Geographic Perspectives*, Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1995, pp. 151-54;. Cited in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New Delhi: Viking, 1996, p. 259.

²³ Visaria and Visaria, *Prospective Population Growth*, p. 11.

(NSDP) of the region, which is significantly higher than the national figure of 28.78 per cent, over the last decade. The contribution of the secondary sector – comprising manufacturing, construction, gas and electricity supply – which provides the essential capital base of the economy, hinges around 18 per cent in the region, compared to the national average of 28.20 per cent. The tertiary sector – which accounts for all the other sectors of the economy not included in the primary and secondary sectors – contribute 47 per cent to the region's NSDP, which is again higher than the all-India figure of 43.02 per cent. It is important to note that the contribution of public administration has been growing over the last decade and accounts for almost 10 per cent to 16 per cent of the NSDP in the States of the Northeast. Another significant growth has been in the sphere of construction activity. However, in the absence of a strong industrial base, the growth of the construction sector presents a paradoxical situation. One plausible explanation for this surge in the construction sector is perhaps the growth of service sector and the real estate across all the States of the region. This growth of the construction sector has its impact in inducing cheap labour flow from the disguisedly employed labour force in agriculture to the urban centres, where the construction activities are located. The resultant effect of the present trend of the growth process has been the casualisation of labour and an increase in urban poverty.

The pace of industrialization in the region is very slow. Assam takes pride in the fact that the first oil refinery of the country was set up in Digboi. However, the petroleum industry in the region has been performing at a considerably lower level in the region than in other parts of the country. Despite the fact that the crude oil reserves in Assam (160,390 thousand tonnes) stand higher than Gujarat (148,020 thousand tonnes), the production of oil is higher in Gujarat. As revealed by the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) statistics on Energy 2003, the production of crude oil in Assam has not only been below Gujarat, but has also been declining over the years. Statistics on the capacity utilization of the oil refineries reveal a relatively low level of capacity utilization compared to other refineries in the country. The figures indicate that capacity utilization in Guwahati refinery was only 45.9 per cent in 2002-03. The low capacity

utilization coupled with declining production is indicative of a decelerating growth process in the most vital industrial sector in the economy of the region. The recent opposition of leading Naga insurgent groups to the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC)-proposed explorations in Nagaland may cause the situation to deteriorate further.²⁴

The region, which also has the largest reservoir of natural gas among the onshore bases, is also plagued by low production levels. The present trends in the growth process hardly indicate any positive impetus of growth in the next decade. In fact, the present deceleration in the economy of the region is likely to witness further curtailment of investment from term-lending financial institutions and deployment of business funds by the banking sectors. Of late, development thinkers from the region have been advocating cross-border trade as one way of inducing the growth impetus in the sluggish economy of the region, taking their cue from the Central Government's 'Look East Policy'.²⁵ But, the 'Look East Policy' is unlikely to work for three reasons - first, the insular mentality of the tribes; second, the poor transport and communication linkages, both intra-state as well as inter-state; and third, the lack of entrepreneurship. The last mentioned is a cultural phenomenon resulting out of self-sufficiency and low rate of monetised market forces that dominate the rural and hill economies of the region. Hence the future economic growth of the region has to be generated from the traditional non-farm sectors based on locally available resources. Unless the traditional and local economic strengths are revamped, mere thrusting of policies from the Centre would fail.

From the national security angle, the situation is complex on account of cultural and political reasons. The Northeast, which was never part of the Indian 'mainstream', has an inherent sense of alienation. The tribal societies there detest interference in their socio-political institutions, yet do not mind receiving huge sums of money from the Centre as development assistance. This has created a structure of corruption in which even the insurgency

²⁴ "NSCN renews warning to oil major," *Telegraph*, May 3, 2005.

²⁵ For a representative sample of this line of argument see the last chapter of Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

syndrome has been roped in. The phenomena of unemployment (see Table 5), insurgency, routine surrender of militants, the extortion business, the unending demands for autonomous district councils, if not separate States, etc., are all parts of one single syndrome – the paradox of northeast’s pride, coupled with its perpetual dependence on the Centre for grants, and the latter’s sense of frustration in failing to emotionally integrate the region with the national ‘mainstream’ in spite of the ever increasing flow of resources. The Partition of India played havoc with the political economy of the region, and unless relations with Bangladesh are improved to the extent of allowing unfettered surface communication through that country, nothing much can be achieved. More than the ‘Look East Policy’, it is the Bangladesh policy that is relevant for the region. The ‘Look East Policy’ has been floated keeping India’s overall economic interest in mind. If the Northeast is made to function as the lynchpin in that strategy or to serve as the gateway to South East Asia, this would be counterproductive because of politico-cultural reasons.

Table 5: Unemployment Rate in Northeast, 1999-2000

States	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	0.9	0.1	1.4	10.0
Assam	4.7	11.9	9.1	22.3
Manipur	2.4	2.5	7.4	10.3
Meghalaya	0.5	0.3	3.4	6.8
Mizoram	2.1	0.5	4.4	2.6
Nagaland	3.0	3.8	9.3	10.8
Sikkim	3.5	2.0	6.7	10.0
Tripura	0.8	4.6	5.5	8.8
India	2.1	1.5	4.8	7.1

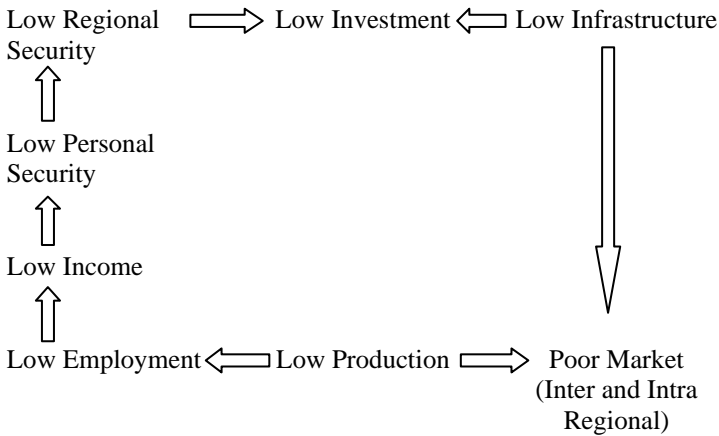
Note: As per usual status approach. Unemployment rate is the percentage of unemployed with reference to labour force.

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 389, dated August 20, 2001.

India’s Bangladesh policy, however, has its own share of imponderables. The questions of Bangladeshi infiltration into

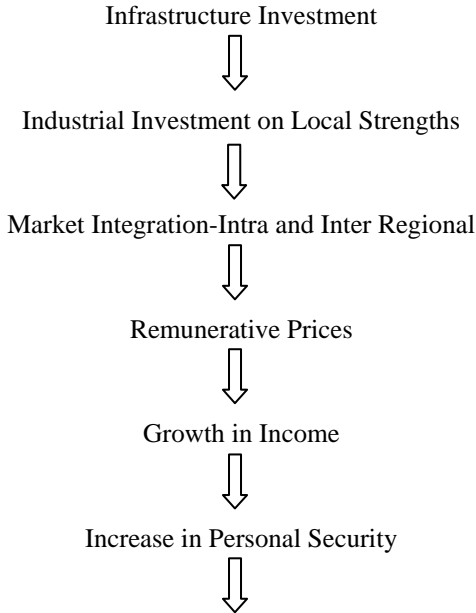
Assam, the spectre of the rise of Islamist militancy in the region,²⁶ the deteriorating Muslim-Hindu relations in Bangladesh, the potential danger of revival of Assam-Bengali distrust, etc., are all intricately interlinked.

The Underdevelopment Cycle



²⁶ See Jaideep Saikia, *Terror sans Frontiers: Islamic Militancy in North East India*, ACDIS Occasional Paper, Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, July 2003.

Alternative Paradigm



Gradual Process of Reduction in Regional Insecurity and Isolation

The Globalization Context

There are two major dichotomies foreseeable in India's march towards globalization that might make the exercise half effective, if not altogether problematic. Globalization in simple terms means unfettered capitalism, at the core of which is a regime of laws and regulations. In other words: Order – both within nations as well as amongst nations. The way society and politics are moving in the Southern Asian region, this is a tall order. The issue of good governance is no longer an academic exercise; on it hinges the fabric of growth and its international connections. Leave alone communal riots, in many parts of India there is a virtual collapse of the state, making it possible for a small number of goons, both organized and unorganized, to hold trade and industry to ransom. Unless an entrepreneur is willing to pay the so-called 'goonda tax', his enterprise cannot function.

Criminalization, communalization and corruption in politics have been blended into a witch's brew, making the state virtually powerless to arrest the contagion. In Bihar, *Marwari* entrepreneurs are leaving the State for better pastures; in the Northeast private capital is shying away from investing in the region; the Naxalite (Left Wing extremist)-infested regions of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar, are virtually out of bounds for the state machinery, let alone private investors.

At a deeper level, the nation is hardly preparing itself for the role of a player in the global marketplace, and here, particularly in comparison with China, the gap is likely to increase.

Let us take the variables of education and human capital to drive home the point. It is an established fact that there is a close relationship between the quantity and quality of human capital – the latter being a function of schooling – as part of the development strategy of a nation. The sequence is schooling → modernity → economic growth. The countries that understood this linkage were the four Asian tigers – Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea – and the results are there for anyone to see. So far as China and India are concerned, both became 'liberated'/independent more or less at the same time, yet in terms of their human capital achievements, China has left India far behind. While the emphasis in China was on mass education, in India it was essentially on education for the higher strata of society. And as the theory goes: 'Education of the elite without mass education is unlikely to foster economic growth.'²⁷

In the foreseeable future, this trend is unlikely to change, if the present is any pointer. The 1986 National Policy on Education, which was updated in 1992, called for free and compulsory school education. But the fact that the programme has not borne fruit is evident from the statistics that reveal that adult (meaning 15 years and above) literacy rate in India is still at 58 per cent (in China it is 85.8 per cent). Even these statistics on India's literacy rate are not fully dependable. Certainly, many so-

²⁷ Richard A. Easterlin, "Why Isn't the Whole World Developed?", *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 41 no. 1, March 1981, p. 10. Cited in Bernadette Anreosso-O'Callaghan, "Human Capital, Education and Growth: China and India Compared," *China Report*, New Delhi, vol. 39 no. 1, January-March 2003, p. 53.

called 'literates' are not actually so. The *Delhi Citizens' Handbook, 2003*, published by the Centre for Civil Society, Delhi, reveals that more than 40 per cent of children who pass Class V from municipal schools cannot read or write their names. It is not too difficult to explain the phenomenon. If schools do not show the results of the 'success' of their pupils they would cease to receive their regular grants. Consequently, they doctor the data.

Against this dismal state of affairs on the Indian education scene, can the country really take advantage of globalization?

The real problem with a low educational attainment in India is that it hampers the country's drive towards its integration into the world economy. The integration of India into an emerging technologically-centred economic system, where cost competitiveness is increasingly being replaced by "non-price" competitiveness based on quality, information and knowledge intensity, calls for a serious upgrading of skills, and therefore of educational performance at all levels, and particularly at the primary level. The integration of a country into the world economy, where half of its population is still illiterate, is indeed difficult to achieve. The new business opportunities rely increasingly on a workforce who can master 'tacit' as well as 'codified knowledge'.²⁸

Here a comparison with China may be instructive. One may argue that the Indian middle class is too large and reasonably well educated to fail to take advantage of the emerging situation. But in that case, the Chinese middle class is even larger and is going to outpace its Indian counterpart several times over in the near future. The following information would be instructive.

- India has 9,000,000 PCs; China has 30,000,000. Can India reach this figure in 5.5 years when India's population would be the same as that of China now?
- In India the average price of a PC is Rs. 46,000; in China it is Rs. 32,400.
- In India the producer-consumer wedge is 39%; in China it is 17%.

²⁸ Anreosso-O'Callaghan, 'Human Capital', p. 53.

- An average Indian spends 38 per cent of his income to buy a PC; in China 19.4 per cent.²⁹

Since India's competition is with China and not with India's smaller neighbours, these negative phenomena cannot be ignored.

There is yet another factor that would come in the way of taking advantage of globalization. It is the problem of lawlessness, which we have referred to above. The critics of globalization argue that it is going to minimize the already small job market because of automation, which is the inevitable result of globalization. To this the champions of globalization argue that every job in BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) creates three new jobs in catering, transport and allied services. But, they say, the problem is that anachronistic municipal laws come in the way.³⁰ One may, however, argue that, in addition to the outdated municipal laws, the law and order situation and the lack of supportive infrastructure is another big obstacle. The particularly disadvantaged areas would be those which are already backward, like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and the entire Northeast. All these places have enormous tourism potential but can take only limited advantage of the situation because of the law and order problem and deficient infrastructure.³¹

Drawing the Agenda

So far as India is concerned, it is only of late, thanks to Amartya Sen's emphasis on health and education, that the cause of poverty and its elimination are being given a new analytical thrust. Earlier efforts to estimate the numbers of poor primarily concentrated on economic variables (based on per capita expenditure or household income) and nutritional intake (based on the 2,400 calorie norm). For the sustenance of anti-poverty programmes, what is most essential is human resource

²⁹ Data culled from the power-point printout of Shubhashis Gangopadhyay, India Development Foundation, December 15, 2003.

³⁰ See Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar, "Where Will Jobs Come From?," *The Economic Times*, New Delhi, September 3, 2003.

³¹ For more on this point, see Partha S. Ghosh, "Challenge of Governance and Globalization: Case Study of India's Northeast," *Ethnic Studies Report*, Kandy, vol. 21 no. 2, July 2003.

development: the two significant components of which are education and health. Insofar as health is concerned, more than its curative aspect, the preventive and promotive aspects are salient. Once these two aspects are taken care of, population problems would be automatically addressed.³²

In India's Northeastern context, it would be relevant to speculate whether China can pose a threat to Indian security in terms of fomenting troubles by stoking tribal disaffection, if not extending outright assistance to the local insurgents with logistic and moral support, as had happened during earlier periods. There are two identical developments in both India and China that tend to suggest that such a possibility may not arise in the near future. These similarities are: one, that both are trying to integrate themselves with the global system with a particular type of extra-territorial nationalism;³³ and two, that both are in the process facing the same kinds of problems with their ethnic minorities in their respective bordering regions.

With globalization high on their agendas, which means rapid progression to economic prosperity, neither China nor India would risk any confrontation that may endanger their anticipated affluence. The pragmatism being shown by both in settling the border row is the most visible indication of the process. But since globalization actually boils down to capitalistic competitiveness, it is likely that the Han majority in China and the Hindu majority in India would take the maximum advantage at the cost of the minorities. Since the service sector, a prominent component of which is tourism, is likely to grow very fast, these dominant communities would penetrate into the bordering tribal areas, which are generally attractive for tourists. In China, the Han tourism promoters operate in large numbers in the Tibetan

³² K.S. Bhat, "Issues Relevant for the Preparation of "21st Century Vision: Social Science"," in M.L. Sondhi, ed., *Towards a New Era: Economic, Social and Political Reforms*, New Delhi: ICSSR, 2001, pp. 46-47.

³³ Although I have argued elsewhere that the present phase of globalization is the third phase, the first starting in the sixteenth century and the second in the nineteenth century, one scholar has argued that globalization is nothing but another form of aggressive nationalism that started in the early twentieth century. See Partha S. Ghosh, "Globalization, Hegemony and Conflict in South Asia: An Indian Perspective," *Sandhan*, New Delhi, vol. 4 no.1, January-June 2004, pp. 1-50; Prasenjit Duara, "Crossing between Old and New Nations," *IAS Newsletter*, Leiden, no. 32, November 2003, pp. 1-3.

Autonomous Region.³⁴ In India, because of the Inner Line Permit and the Restricted Area Permit systems in large parts of the Northeast, this is not yet happening; however, other capitalist entrepreneurs are functioning in forest and cash crop related industries in the region. Both these developments are causing resentment amongst the locals, in China's Tibet and in India's Northeast. As such, both China and India are evenly poised to neutralising each other's nuisance potential. If China tries to be difficult with India by assisting the northeastern insurgencies, India can as well make things difficult for China through Tibetans living in Arunachal Pradesh and other parts of India. In short, the comparative advantage the Chinese enjoyed earlier is no longer available to them. Still, India needs to be watchful of the potential danger and as such keep the Northeast under its microscope.

Bangladesh, as noted above, also needs careful watch. The economic development and security of the North East cannot be ensured without a free and uninterrupted communication network, both land and riverine, through Bangladesh. As such, at some point of time, India will have to either work out a cooperative strategy with Bangladesh or use some highhanded tactics; otherwise it is not possible to ensure the development and security of the Northeast. One way of achieving this is through military means, which may not be desirable in the present global milieu and can evoke hostile international reactions both from within the region as well as from outside. The other strategy of achieving this is through a complicated process of proactive demographic invasion. Make the Indo-Bangla border totally open, making it possible for any Bangladeshi to migrate to any part of India. If there is an exodus of Bangladeshis to India it would destroy the very *raison d'être* of Bangladesh to remain as an independent country. In that situation India could create a political climate within Bangladesh to ask for its merger with India. But to achieve this, the secular and civilisational dimensions of India would have to be played up, not the Hindutva dimension. For otherwise, not only would it not be possible, it would lead to further chaos,

³⁴ June Teufel Dreyer, "Assimilation and Accommodation in China," in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly, eds., *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997, p. 382.

resulting in Hindu-Muslim riots strengthening the case for the perpetuation of an independent Bangladesh. Once this is achieved, Nepal's incorporation into the Indian Union would be just a matter of time and the same would be true with Bhutan. The eventual reunification of India and Pakistan could as well be contemplated in due course. This would restore the British India without Myanmar. Of course, China and other powers would not be sitting idle when all this would be happening. China would certainly react sharply if military means are employed to achieve this goal. But if the civilisational and proactive demographic invasion model is employed, it really cannot do much to block the process. There is nothing sacrosanct about national boundaries, and the 20th Century alone witnessed many of these being changed radically.

With respect to social problems, it is anticipated that many of these would be driven by job-related-stresses. The considerations that govern 21st Century corporations mark a shift from those of their 20th Century counterparts. Thus, since the growth trend will be from wealth *extracting* to wealth *creating*, job expectations will shift from *job security* to *employment security*. People in corporations will be *nomadic* rather than *employees*; strategy will move from *top-down* to *bottom-up*. Most large corporations will have many part-time and contract jobs and only a smaller number of full-time jobs. In the 20th Century, people joined companies for secure jobs. In the Indian context, the scramble for Government jobs has always been there because they provided job security and status. The authority of the company and management was accepted because, in return, people got secure jobs. In the 21st Century milieu, job security is more threatened due to constant changes in the mode of business transactions. Given India's social milieu, where familial bonds matter so much in respect of old age care, social dependence during joblessness, etc., employment uncertainties would, at the socio-psychological level, be extremely destabilizing.

It is necessary that India develop the 'Integrated Assessment Approach' as a methodological tool for this kind of futuristic analysis. This would enable, to some extent at least, a reduction in the problem of predictability in social sciences. The acquisition of knowledge is not merely for the sake of knowledge, but it has to

be also utility-oriented. We must be able to know not just in order to learn but also to be able to act such knowledge, to outline problems and prospects, in order to use them as tools for development strategies that have an impact on the future.³⁵

Conclusion

There is an old adage: strive for peace but keep your powder dry. It can be improved so as to mean: keep your powder dry but strive not to require it at all. India's security can be best served if its internal problems are contained, thereby giving no excuse or opportunity to its enemies to take advantage of them and to outmaneuver the nation. At present whatever the ruling elites in India's neighbouring states may say in order to impress their domestic galleries, at the mass level, everywhere in the region, India's reputation as a thriving secular democracy is growing systematically. Hindi films and Hindi Television soap operas, and through them the Hindi language, are not only contributing remarkably to India's own integration process, but are also selling a positive image of India in its neighbourhood and beyond. The role of India's civil society in protecting and buttressing the nation's democratic institutions is being emulated everywhere in the region, often to the embarrassment and chagrin of the regional ruling classes. All these are the greatest guarantee to India's national security.

But complacency is a disease. There remain several possibilities in India's socio-political profile, which are potentially disruptive. The biggest challenge that is knocking at the door is the unprecedented incidence of terrorism and insurgency, which have significant domestic roots. While it is important to deal with their international connections, it is equally important not to do anything at home that could enlarge their appeal within their respective communities. At the same time, while the multiculturalism of Indian society does call for celebration, the state apparatus must remain vigilant, and guard

³⁵ In developed countries such research has been going on for decades. See Hussein Abaza and Andrea Baranzini, eds., *Interpreting Sustainable Development: Integrated Assessment and Participatory Decision-Making Processes*, Geneva: UNEP, 2002.

against the possibility of its excessive romanticisation, which could transform it into a threat to India's integrity. India's security concerns have to be holistic and so should be the strategy to prepare the nation to confront these.