CHAPTER II

STUDENT POLITICS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE
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Student activism has assumed a global dimension. All over the world, youth particularly student youth, are in revolt against authority and status quo. Since the Second World War, student agitational politics has been more extensive and more significant than in earlier periods. Students played a crucial role during 1950s in dislodging or weakening regimes in the developing and communist worlds. During the sixties, student activism affected the developed industrialised nations of Europe and North America. The decade of the 1960s was a turbulent one which experienced an upsurge and diffusion of student/youth movements throughout the world. Since then student politics with all its ramifications and implications has attracted the attention of ruling elites, policy makers, educational authorities, social scientists and research scholars. However, it is hazardous to generalise the different dimensions of student politics at a global level on account of the diversity of the sources and ingredients of student politics and its far reaching consequences on the educational system and the larger society. Therefore, an attempt is made to analyse various facets of student politics under three broad groups of countries, namely, the advanced capitalist countries, the socialist countries and the third world countries.
A. Student Politics in the Advanced Capitalist Countries:

Among the advanced capitalist countries, the United States is not only the most economically developed in the world, but it is the nation which has made the greatest commitment to mass higher education. Student political activism in the United States has attracted global attention since the sixties. The decade of 1930s was the period of the most intense student activism prior to the sixties. As the combined impact of economic depression and growing awareness of foreign policy issues such as the rise of fascist dictatorship in Europe and the changing role of the United States in world affairs, students became increasingly involved in political activism. This period witnessed the emergence of large scale ideologically oriented organisations on the left.

In the post Second World War period, the cold war between the two super powers - the liberal democratic U.S.A. and the socialist USSR - shaped the political experiences of students in the West. The cold war, which began in earnest in 1947 dealt a serious blow to student activism, which did not resume until the end of 1950s. Intellectuals and students in the liberal democratic West defended their socio-political system against the expansionist tendencies of totalitarian
system, both Communist and Fascist, and this practically smothered all radical politics.¹

Student activism began slowly to revive in the late 1950s, when Mc Carthy's anti-Communist repression was gradually discredited, and the free expression of political opinion was assured. In the late 1950s American students were dismayed by the disjunction of rhetoric and reality in their society. "Discovery of the subjection of the Negroes in the democratic enlightened American gave rise to the radical student movement... It was intensified by the discovery of the grinding poverty in the world's wealthiest nation and by the thought of the world's greatest power, being engaged in a war of attrition in a tiny underdeveloped country."² The American student movement first emerged out of the civil rights activities in the South. Student involvement for equal civil rights for Negroes was triggered, consequent upon the desegregation decision of the American Supreme Court in 1954. The civil rights movement stimulated a new consciousness among students who launched civil disobedience movements that resulted in the passage of extensive civil rights legislation and achieved the supreme ideal of equal rights enshrined in the Constitution.

A New Left movement swept through the campuses of most of the advanced Western countries. It was a global phenomenon which belonged to the decade of sixties. It was a movement of the youth led by students from institutions of higher education. It was a response to the dichotomy between the ideals of their society and the actual conditions which blatantly stood in contradiction to them. "But the New Left everywhere challenged the three major politically organised forces on the Left: liberalism, social-democracy and Moscow oriented communism. Paradoxically, the New Left gained strength only when it espoused and acted on the vision and values of liberalism, social democracy and abstractly of communism". The first manifestation of the New Left in the United States was at Berkeley in 1964. The birth of the New Left in the United States is said to have been due to the civil rights movement, the antipathy of the students to the 'multiversity' and the lack of a strong Left wing political party through which the students could express their views. The New Left activists rejected old Left of the socialists and the communists as having compromised easily with the liberal establishment. Its programme includes, "the rejection of many prevailing American institutions, and vaguely democratic socialist political ideology, a faith in participatory

democracy, a commitment to direct reform social action.... Its ultimate goal is radical reform of American society and the characteristic nature of human roles and relationships on which it rests. Two threatening terms 'student power' and 'confrontation' have become identified with the action of the New Left activists. "The goal of the New Left is to achieve enough student power in all decision-making so that the University will become a really democratic institution."  

The American University crisis has been most graphically manifested in the Berkeley student revolt in 1964 at Columbia University in 1968. There have been some discontent at the mass nature of American higher education. At least part of the underlying cause of Berkeley student revolt was a protest against the 'depersonalisation' of the undergraduate student, 'the computerisation' of the University, and the absence of teacher-student contact at the large State Universities. Student radicals demanded right of free speech on the campus, emphasized academic issues and exposed what was still wrong in an affluent liberal and democratic society.

The war in Vietnam was the key issue in stimulating what was the largest and the most militant student movement in American history. It was the war and especially the draft

which directly affected the student community and stimulated massive activism. The faculty lent support to the students in their opposition to a war in which the world's mightiest power was engaged in a war in a small underdeveloped country. Students considered American action at variance with a fundamental democratic belief - the right of self-determination of peoples. Student agitations at Columbia University in 1968 were stimulated by the University's participation in the secret Institute for Defence Analysis. During the Cambodian incursion in May 1970, American students opposed the war through protest movements.

Black students have supported the demand for Black power in the United States. They have fought White domination in American society; their demands have been concrete and have gone directly to academic issues. On University campus they demanded more Negro students and faculty and curriculum that predominantly featured Afro-American history and experience. Thus racial discrimination, involvement in foreign wars and the defects of the University have been the major factors stimulating student activism in U.S.A. A new youth culture has emerged in the post-industrial era which rejects "what it sees to be the operational ideals of American society: materialism, competition, rationalism, technology, consumerism.

and militarism. This emerging culture is the deeper cause of student protest against war, social injustice and the abuses of multiversity. American students proved during the 1960s that they could have an impact on national politics and play a significant role in vital aspects of American education and society.

The 1970s have been seen as a period of student political apathy in the United States. The decade stands in especially sharp contrast to the revolutionary 1960s. There have been relatively few active demonstrations and student energy seems to flow in non-political direction; but the American campuses are not entirely devoid of political consciousness or organisations either. Demonstrations in 1977 at Kent State University protesting the proposed construction of a gymnasium at the site of the 1972 shootings resulted in the arrest of a large number of students. Students in California and several other parts of the United States have protested against American policy in Southern Africa and against the investment policies of the University. At the state and national levels, student government organisations have been quite active and are engaged in lobbying efforts to protect student interest.

Although politics, in general, has become a less important concern of American students during 70s, students

have remained liberal to radical on questions of life style and culture. One of the primary causes for the decline of student activism is that the key moral issues which have aroused students in the recent past: race relation, Vietnam and the like do not now exist. The direct problems of the student community: competitions for grade in order to enter remunerative professional fields, unemployment of graduates in some of the liberal arts and widespread unemployment problem at the doctoral level, cutbacks in scholarship assistance, research funds and in public assistance to higher education are all serious concern of students, but have not led to student political unrest. Nevertheless, the legacy of the American student movement of the sixties continues to influence American life in various ways.

In Europe, the student movement has grown out of the New Left. New Left radicalism took concrete shape in 1956 with the opposition to the Anglo-French attack upon Suez and the revolt of Polish and Hungarian workers and intellectuals including students against Stalinist type of society.

Student activism in United Kingdom attracted attention during 1930s as a reaction to the disastrous consequences of the economic depression. Brian Simon, Left activist, wrote the


first critique of the University system. The post Second World War decade saw no worthwhile political movement until 1956, 'the watershed year of British politics'. New trends emerged on the national political left in which youth and students played an important part. The British New Left Movement, as it existed between 1957 and 1962, had its genesis in the Suez Canal crisis of 1956 and the campaign for nuclear disarmament in the year after 1958.

A major student revolt took place in March 1967 at the London School of Economics and Political Science. It was based on eight demands relating to reforms in the University and change in student status through executive responsibility. The nine day sit-in at LSEP was followed by occupation and administration by students themselves in the other Universities of Hull, Hornsey, and Essex. Student activism also hit Oxford University when angry undergraduates besieged University administration offices on June 3, 1968 demanding political freedom.

Student radicals in United Kingdom have been influenced by the writings of Mao-Tse-Tung, Herbert Marcuse and Che Guevara. There was a general sense of resentment among University students about the Wilson government's support for American policy on Vietnam. British students were agitated
over the issues of South Africa and Rhodesia. The National Union of Students (NUS) is recognised as the official spokesman of the student community with nationwide membership and a potential for influencing British political life. British students have fought for academic reforms, demanding adequate student participation in the decision making process, greater contact with faculty, modernisation of curricula and less number of examinations. However, "British students suffer from a deep sense that they have no place in the political structure of the nation".12

Prior to the American student participation in the civil rights movement, the largest revolt in the Western World was occasioned by French student protest against the Algerian war in 1961. Student movement in France attained its climax in 1968, culminating in barricades in Paris and street fighting with the police throughout the University cities of France.

The May Movement of 1968 led initially by students and teachers was a turning point in French politics which debilitated the Gaullist administration and led to the ultimate fall of de Gaulle.13 The May Movement was triggered off by student dissatisfaction against overcrowding, rigid discipline


in the Halls of Residence, demand for sexual freedom, inadequate grants and lack of cultural and other facilities.
The students of Nanterre, a model campus in the outer suburb of Paris led by Daniel Cohn Bandit, went to the historic courtyard of Sorbonne in the heart of Paris to protest against the closing of their campus on account of disturbances over a free speech issue. When the Police was called by University administration to clear the buildings, about sixty thousand students fought a pitched battle in the streets of Paris and demonstrations of solidarity took place throughout France. French student movement shed its tradition of elitism in order to mobilise the working class for support. Nearly a million Parisian workers stopped work and came out into the street to march with the students to demonstrate against the Gaullist government. The General Confederation of Labour declared a general strike.

The May Revolt involved the whole fabric of the society and the University. It exposed the structural paradoxes in an affluent capitalist society. The radical students consider representative democracy a failure and argue for a participatory democracy, "where everybody votes on everything that affects them". The May Revolt accomplished certain things but could not weld the student and workers' movements
Within a month of its success the student revolutionary elite found itself rejected by the French working class. In the elections for the National Assembly at the end of June, 1968, the government of de Gaulle won an overwhelming victory although students claim a great deal of credit for de Gaulle's fall after the defeat of the May, 1969 referendum.

As in many other countries student activism of the sixties was followed in France by a period of retreat and an overall mood of passivity which characterised the collective behaviour of students in the 1970s. Boudon explains this by three main factors: (1) institutionalisation of politics within the university system which resulted from the 1968 Loy d'Orientation, which gave the minority willing to be politically active, an opportunity of being so while dissuading the majority. The official introduction of politics into the university system via the election mechanisms to councils, committees had the unintended effect of accelerating the 'depoliticisation' of a majority of the student body; (2) As a consequence of the 1968 movement, universities are more diversified than they were prior to 1968, giving the students more choice. The number of universities has increased, an increase in the differentiation of teachers and types of


curricula has been evident and a greater number of decisions are now made at the university level;(3) In the seventies, the returns from higher education decreased absolutely, while they remained constant or increased relatively. Unemployment and economic hardship for the increasing number of students of lower middle class background contributed to transforming the ideal-typical model of the full-time student into a new model student, economically active for a part of his time. This has produced a system of orienting students towards individualistic strategies. As a result of these factors, the conflicts of the seventies were of the 'corporalists - particularist - materialistic type' (students struggle to defend their interest as a body), contrasting with the 'cultural universalistic' conflicts which characterised the late sixties. In spite of the retreat, surveys show that a high proportion of students feel close to political ideologies weakly represented, if at all, in societal political institutions.

In the mid 1980s, student activism made its impact felt. In December 1986, the French students protested government efforts to impose reforms on higher education. Protests involving more than 1,00,000 students in Paris and even larger numbers in the rest of the country in December, were stimulated by opposition to a government plan to raise standards of higher education, to impose fees, to provide more autonomy to the
universities and to link higher education more directly to the job market. "Students, largely from the left, opposed the notion of increased selectivity and saw the reforms as a conservative 'plot' to link higher education to industry and commerce." The demonstrations were successful in forcing the conservative government of Jacques Chirac to back down.

Student movement in Germany had an inglorious record during Hitler's regime. Students surrendered to the Nazis and their cry became: "With the State, against the Professors!". After the Second World War, most of the German students were rightist apathetic; they were known as the 'skeptical generation'. They were without ideology, without zeal to protest against ills in society and gave primacy to private life and activity. Most of them were apathetic and politically conformist in attitude. By 1965, a new generation of students had come into existence which had no living recollection of the holocaust which the Nazis had brought and no share of its responsibility. In 1965, mass demonstrations were launched by students in West Germany against inadequate public fund for higher education. German students see the main remedies to the crisis of the German university system in 'democratisation'—particularly, the participation of the 'intermediate structure'.

and the students in academic decision making. The Free University of West Berlin has been the nerve centre of radical German student activity. It has been a bastion of student radicals called the SDS (Socialist German Students League). It is the sole political organisation of the Left which provides radical leadership to the West German students.

In the spring of 1967, Berlin students demonstrated against the visit of Vice-President Hubert Humphrey of the United States as he was a spokesman of the Vietnam War. They also demonstrated against the visiting Saha of Iran whose regime was characterised by repression. Fred Halliday writes: "The West German experience provides one of the most instructive models of student movement anywhere in the world to day: its theoretical emphasis, its mass mobilisation, its outflanking of the existing student union and its total confrontation with the system are all features of international significance."

In recent years students of West Germany have fought for nuclear disarmament, reduction of conventional armament by the two military blocs and the integration of West and East Germany (this has been achieved). Improvement in the relations between the two super powers and considerable progress in START (Treaty on Limitation on Strategic Arms), has added to the prospect of a war free Europe demanded by the peoples of Europe.

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Italian students have characterised the student revolution as a total or global confrontation. They assail the operational values of modern society and the corrupt and non-responsive institutions of the Establishment. "Italian students combine with equal vigour Vietnam and Czechoslovakia, American economic investment in Western Europe and Russian economic domination of Eastern Europe, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact. They have fought against the ills of the universities: overcrowding; antiquated curriculum, distance between professors and students and overall authoritarianism. They have demanded greater student participation in university affairs.

In the academic year 1967-68, student revolt swept the Italian campuses. Beginning with the seizure of the Turin University, 19 of the 23 state universities were affected. The charter of demands prepared by the students mainly aimed at the reform of the content and organisation of higher education. Despite organisational constraints Italian students have displayed greater student power within the universities than in most of the European countries.

After 1968 Italian students opposed the dominant culture of the society and criticised the universities for being representative of this culture. Since 1968, "the Italian student movement has moved from a stress on a libertarian

utopia to its current emphasis on the support for political terrorism". During the late 70s, the Italian student movement experienced revival. This manifestation of student activism has been stimulated largely by the frustration and growing range of marginal youth including many university students, over the continuing crisis of Italian society. In February, 1977, students in Rome demonstrated against the Ministry of Education. Demonstration also took place in other Italian cities, often with violent result. The social and economic crisis in Italy has stimulated a change in the technique and focus of the student movement. The universities have not provided students with the professional skills needed to successfully enter the job market. The problems created by overcrowded universities, growing unemployment and general economic crisis, all contributed to a growing alienation, discontentment and radicalisation of student community. Given the situation many young people have been attracted to militant radicalism and political violence. Thus the student movement has experienced a collapse of representative student institutions, the rise of dogmatism and sectarianism and the glorification of violence as a means of social change.

The Fascist regime in Spain installed during the 1930s was hostile to the intellectuals and continued to

22. Ibid., p.657.
neglect the educational system. Spanish student movement was in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and reform of the university system. Comparative calm on the Spanish campuses was broken in 1965 when students demanded free speech and free discussion on the campus and modernisation of the university through overdue reforms.

Spanish students have campaigned for the right to form free unions and this has brought them closer to the workers who had been struggling for free trade unions. In February 1967 students in Madrid demonstrated to demand workers' representation on a Committee deliberating a change in trade union law. The student-worker solidarity was consummated by the three days of national struggle declared for 1-3 May, 1968. Spanish students have achieved two notable successes. They have been in the vanguard of the popular struggle against Franco's military dictatorship. The fall of Franco and the consequent democratisation of the Spanish polity owe a lot to the student movement. Secondly, the Spanish student movement is the first European one to achieve organised alliance with the workers.

The Portuguese student movement has been characterised as a "revolt against gerentocratic fascism". Portuguese students revolted against Fascist dictatorship of old men and

secret policies: Students have provided political opposition to powers that be and have protested against Portugal's involvement in several colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique. They have also demanded students' self government, academic freedom and university reform.

Student politics in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland has been characterised by the low level of activism or a low degree of 'confrontation politics' due mainly to stability and legitimacy of the established political structures. "There is a strong element of trade unionism in Scandinavian student politics......the student bodies are, to a large extent, responsible for social welfare among the students......The student bodies often own property and thus student government assumes a considerable amount of economic and social responsibility. Moreover, student bodies can negotiate directly with the national government concerning loans, support for students and their general welfare".24

In general, Scandinavian countries provide institutionalised channel for the expression of student opinion and demands. Students are represented in decision making bodies of the universities. Students Unions display a commitment

to democracy and internationalism. Despite well developed welfare systems, student activists on the Left have assailed the structural imbalances in their own society.

Students have occasionally risen in revolt in Sweden. They planned to invade Stockholm in May, 1968 to press for increased aid to underdeveloped countries. In the wake of the May revolt of 1968, they demonstrated to sympathise with their counterparts in France. In Norway students have demonstrated for state loans to all students irrespective of family's economic status.

In sharp contrast to the placid nature of Scandinavian student politics, student politics in Japan is marked by a high degree of political dissent and activism. Compared to their European and American counterparts, the Japanese radical students are better organised and better financed. Fred Halliday writes: "The Japanese student movement has played a historic role in any world perspective. It pioneered mass revolutionary action in an industrialised country, years before it was achieved in Europe and America. It was radical in methods and aims, and showed the way for uncompromising and unconventional forms of struggle."

Japanese student politics has had a long tradition of activism stretching back to the beginnings of Japan's modernisation in 1868. Throughout the period they have been leading

Leftist elements, although a sizeable minority supported the Fascist movement during the 1930s. The transformation of the Japanese University since World War II, from an elitist institution to a mass system has accentuated academic problems. Student unrest at Japanese University has "combined political dissent with educational complaints in a manner similar to other countries."\textsuperscript{26} The educational complaints directed at the University have included overcrowding, lack of contact with professors, irrelevant courses and inadequate student participation in decision making process. The educational system is highly competitive and places great stress on the Japanese student.

Radical students in Japan have involved themselves in national political affairs and have attracted global attention. Anti-Americanism has been the primary source of political activism since the World War II. The most publicised political revolt of Japanese students occurred in 1960 against the renewal of security treaty between Japan and U.S.A. Prior to this, Japanese student movement has been active in all the major political struggles of the post-war period: against the Mac-Arthur purge in 1950, against the Subversive Activities Prevention Law in 1952 and against Special Police Power in 1958.

In the post World War period, the Zengakuren has been the largest, the most militant and most powerful student organisation in Japan. It has mobilised large number of students to participate in political demonstrations and succeeded in causing the downfall of Kishi regime in 1960. Mass demonstrations led by the students resulted in the cancellation of the visit of American President Eisenhower. In 1968 massive student demonstrations were organised against the Vietnam War. Student militants have forged alliance with the workers and peasants on important domestic issues. "Student leaders, frustrated by the pragmatic nature of Japanese politics, have sought to use the student movement as a means of revolution in Japan".

The foregoing survey of student politics in the United States, Western Europe and Japan helps us to formulate some common elements of student politics in advanced capitalist countries. The objectives of student movements are directed at the whole fabric of society, not merely at the university. Students protest against the social, economic, political and cultural maladies. After the abatement of the Cold War during the late 1950s, "the Western World has returned to a more 'normal' or 'peaceful' social environment in which the main focus of intellectual and student politics has been able to

return to the domestic scene. The domestic system including the educational system itself, is criticised for not living upto the ideals fostered by the society."\textsuperscript{28}

Students have dramatised the problems of the society and university and in some cases have exerted influence on the decision making process. Students in the post-industrial countries have voiced dissatisfaction with capitalistic democracies in which they live and the Soviet model of communism as they consider both "as inherently violent society....and dehumanising".

Student unrest in advanced capitalist countries is, to some extent, the consequence of affluence and alienation. Students of the affluent West are less worried about the basic needs of life and are free to direct their energies to educational and social issues. Affluence is probably more of a factor of student unrest in the United States than it is in other capitalist countries.

The student New Left has highlighted the alienation of rebel students in affluent societies. They are alienated from the psychological brutality, authoritarianism, corruption, hypocrisy and consumerism of their society. They suffer from a profound crisis of belief caused primarily by the hypocrisy of the adult World: parents, teachers and authorities. They demand

\textsuperscript{28} Lipset, S. M., "The Possible Effects of Student Activism on International Politics", \textit{Quest}, no. 61, April-June, 1969, p. 45.
more individual freedom from the complexities of technological urban life. The university situation contributes to the alienation of students of affluent societies. The capitalist system has used the university as a 'knowledge factory' which is an exploitative part of productive process. Universities have been turned into training and recruiting centres for an increasingly complex technological society and students have been treated as numbers by machine like systems. The form and content of education have been determined by the needs of the capitalist class.

Students have been more active in pressing for much needed educational reforms. These demands include better teaching, more contact with teachers, relevant curriculum, examination reform, academic freedom, free speech on the campus, larger budget allocation for higher education and above all, a larger share in decision making process of the academic system. The demand for 'student power' really means student participation in academic decision making.

The number of hard core radical students is quite small but their influence is out of proportion to their small number. "In most countries, the radicals are estimated at one percent of the University population and then only at some Universities". The New Left in U.S.A. and U.K. the SDS in West

29. See Kerr, Clark, Uses of the University; and Davidson, Carl, "Campaigning on the Campus", in A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn (eds.) op. cit.

Germany and Zengakuren in Japan have numerically small but radical students who successfully mobilise the mass of students for a cause and are capable of creating serious problems for the authorities. They verbally reflect significant influence of Mao, Castro, Guevara, Marcuse and some of the old anarchists.

Despite the overall stability and legitimacy of the political structures and value system in most of the advanced capitalist countries, student movements have fought for important changes in the social, political, and educational systems. "The Civil Rights Movements and the campaign against the Vietnam War by American students, the revolt of Japanese students against Japan - U.S. Security Pact, the opposition of French students to the Gaullist government, the role of German students as an extra-parliamentary opposition and the opposition of the Spanish and Portuguese students to Fascist regime have been politically significant to their society." 31

Students in affluent societies have, by and large, failed to forge a permanent alliance with the workers and the peasants although in such countries as France, Spain and Japan they have succeeded in eliciting workers' support on several occasions. There has been divergence of interests of students who offer a moral criticism of society and of the workers and other deprived sections who are engaged in the

practical struggles to improve their life situation within the framework of industrial societies. The absence of a common front of students, workers and deprived sections has adversely affected the stability and effectiveness of student movements.

In most of the advanced capitalist countries one finds a contrast between the revolutionary decade of the sixties from the point of view of student radicalism and a period of 'retreat' characterising the seventies and the eighties. With the exception of relatively minor episodes, few collective demonstrations have occurred in the later periods, which could be compared in intensity, mobilisation, duration and creativity of student activism in the sixties. The economic down turn in the 1970s brought a change in the priorities of many students. Students turned from the Social Sciences and Humanities to Professional courses in order to ensure brighter career prospects and political activism began to appear a risky enterprise. Moreover, "the very success of the University reform efforts of 1960s in several countries diminished the activist thrust". Perhaps the most important cause of the decline of student movement in such countries is that "external political realities have changed". Issues of societal politics and foreign policy, which have earlier stimulated student activism, no longer exist. The idealistic orientation and moral

fervour displayed by students during the sixties have been replaced by materialistic orientation and student involvement in practical issues and achievable goals.

Califano writes from his experience that he found no evidence of an international conspiracy among students except for occasional allegations that the Chinese Communists were putting funds into radical student movements. The striking similarity in students' tactics "is largely attributable to the enormous impact of the media, particularly television, and increase in student trouble....students watch each others technique to see what succeeds and fails".33

B. Student Politics in the Socialist Countries:

The developed and developing non-capitalist countries which have adopted the ideology of Marxian socialism with varying interpretations have also been prone to youth and student revolt. Notwithstanding the highly centralised political systems in the Soviet Union, China, Eastern Europe and a few others, students have played a major role in their efforts to change the status quo. Students in socialist society are critical of the authoritarian and oppressive nature of the regimes and their international orientation. Student unrest in such countries "has been based at least in part on the

differences which young people perceive between the theory and practice of communism. In the absence of public oppositional politics, it is noteworthy that "students and intellectuals have played a major role in the movements to liberalise the totalitarian regimes."

Soviet Russia has a long tradition of student activism stretching back to the middle of the 19th century. In the 19th century, university students were almost the only group to engage in demonstrations demanding freedom and economic reform. Universities were the focus of revolution in Czarist Russia and they were credited with terrorist activities to undermine the autocratic system. Student unrest occurred almost annually at the University of Moscow from the late 1880s to the revolutions of 1905. Historians testify that the Russian workers learnt the utility of street demonstrations from students. However, students were prevented from playing a vanguard role in the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 by Lenin and his followers, who looked upon students as a conservative and reactionary element. In the Stalinist era, student activism was severely suppressed after the plot of a group of activist students to assassinate him was exposed.


The de-stalinisation campaign initiated by the powerful speech of Nikita Khruschev of February 1956 inspired students and intellectuals to assail the unsavoury features of the Soviet society and the way of life. Despite the absence of spectacular student movements in the Soviet Union in the post-War period, students along with intellectuals have played a major role in demanding the reforms of the Soviet society, insisting on more freedom and greater intellectual integrity.\textsuperscript{36}

The role of Chinese students has been of critical political importance since the turn of the 19th century. Chinese students were crucial in their country's modern transformation and played a key role in the victory of Chinese Communism. They helped greatly in bringing about the downfall of Manchu Dynasty at the turn of the century. They backed Sun-Yat-Sen and were instrumental in spreading radical ideas of democracy and modernisation throughout the country. With the overthrow of monarchy in 1911, they rallied around Chen Tuhsiu, who called for the establishment of a thoroughly democratic and egalitarian society. Student politics reached a second climax in May, 1919 when the huge student demonstration against Japanese imperialist pressure on China, inaugurated the second Chinese revolution. It has been upheld as an example of student power, which served as

\textsuperscript{36} See Burg, David, "Observations on Soviet University Students", \textit{Daedalus}, op. cit.
a catalyst for the political and cultural renaissance of China. The Chinese Communist party was formed in 1920 by leading participants in the 4 May Movement.

In the 1930s, student movements, demonstrations and strikes played a major role in undermining Chiang-Ki-Shek. They organised a united resistance to the Japanese. In the fight between the Communist and Koumintang (Nationalists led by Chiang), Chinese students supported the former and following World War II, student activism contributed greatly to the final downfall of the Nationalist regime and paving the way for communist victory.

Richard Walker is of the view that Chinese students and intellectuals were victims of 'the mistique of the revolution'. Since the twenties, the Chinese Communist party has realised the value of students in organising workers, peasants and intellectuals. During the early fifties, the party promoted student political action in a series of mass movements controlled by it and the Youth League. "Mao adopted a radically modern ideology but he adopted it to Chinese conditions by finding the source of absolute virtue in the downtrodden rural masses. In the communist countryside, students found the assurance that they could be both pure and progressive radical reformers and hundred percent Chinese".


The year 1957 witnessed "the Hundred Flowers" campaign in which open criticism was encouraged by the party. The results startled the regime since it was exposed to a barrage of attacks by older intellectuals and students. The vanguard role of the Chinese students in the 'Cultural Revolution' of 1966 attracted global attention. Millions of students participated in vast rallies, long marches and turbulent struggles throughout China. Student militancy in the initial period of the cultural revolution was directed against non-party and anti-party tendencies on the campuses, but with the emergence of Red Guards, prominent party leaders came under attack. "In the shake up of university system that followed the cultural revolution, it was decided to induct 'more revolutionary sons of workers and peasants' and students in Peking University wrote the press declaring the need for students to divide their time between military training, manual labour and academic study".39

In recent years, student unrest in China has been a source of worry for the authorities: At the end of 1986 students began to demonstrate for greater political freedom and went to the extent of demanding an end to the monopoly of power by the Communist Party. Student protest in 1987 centred around free discussion and political liberalisation.

Chinese students have protested against, what they feel, is the government's neglect of the university; big character posters criticising the party over this question appeared during Seventh National Peoples' Congress in March, 1988. Student activism has jolted China all through 1988. Seventy Seven centres of higher learning in twenty five cities and provinces were involved in incidents including protest marches, distribution of leaflet from January to July 1988. In Beijing University, anger over the murder of a student "quickly snowballed into a demand for democratisation and greater political freedom".

The Eastern European Communist countries live in the shadow of student revolution which took place in Hungary in 1956. Public oppositional politics have rarely been possible in such countries. The vacuum has been filled by intellectuals and students who have played a "major role in the movements to liberalise the totalitarian regimes". Richard Cornell writes:"Student political activity in Eastern Europe has usually taken the form of opposition to an antiquated ecclesiastical system, to outside political domination, to oppressive political regimes or to attempts to organise, regulate, direct and control student life, thought and activity".

41. Lipset, S. M., "University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries", op. cit.
42. Cornell, Richard, "Students and Politics in the Communist Countries of Eastern Europe" in Students and Politics, Dedalus, op. cit., p.166.
One of the major thrusts of student activities throughout Eastern Europe in the inter war period was directed towards improving living conditions and educational facilities. There has been an upsurge of nationalism in Eastern Europe in the beginning of 1950s and students have protested against soviet hegemony and challenged the centralised control of the Communist Party.

The Hungarian student revolt of October, 1956 was aimed at shaking off the tutelege of the "regime's control organs". Students set up their own independent organisation which was a challenge to the party veterans of the old guard. The October "student uprising was directed against the corrupt leaders whose corruption have been made manifest to all. The uprising was crushed, but its spectre continued to haunt the Communist World".43

The Polish students have been critical of the regime's authoritarian measures and rose in revolt in the anti-Stalinist demonstration of October, 1956. In March, 1968 Warsaw University students ignored the new warnings of the authority and demanded the reinstatement of the six dismissed professors. They denounced censorship and pressed for the release of their colleagues, arrested and drafted into the armed services because of their participations in demonstrations.

43. Feuer, Lewis, op. cit., p. 300.
Students of Czechoslovakia have been in the forefront of demands for liberalisation and democratisation. In 1967, students protested against bad living conditions and political repression by Communist regime. Student activism played a key role in the decline of the old Stalinists and the introduction of liberal measures.

Students of Yugoslavia were less disaffected with their society on account of the liberal political system with a more decentralised type of socialist economy under President Tito who maintained a policy line independent of the Soviet hegemony. However, in June 1968 students of Belgrade University were engaged in a sit-in on the issues of poor food, crowded dormitories, poor instructions etc. They also raised the deeper generational issues with the slogan "Down with the Red Bourgeoisie", they fought for "greater democracy especially in the League of Communists".

There are some common elements of student politics in East European Communist countries. Youth and student movements in such countries are characterised by similarity in "organisational structures, basic goals and politics". There are "separate autonomous student organisations" which are actually under the control of the party-approved leaders of youth organisations.

44. See Cornell, Richard, op. cit.
Youth and students were enthusiastic supporters of Communists in the early years after their accession to power. "The failure of the Communists in Eastern Europe to provide a free democratic alternative to the pre-war authoritarian regimes, however, has led to the disillusionment...the desire for more individual freedom both intellectual and physical, and end to censorship and more travel abroad are the most frequently observed demands of young students and intellectuals". The more liberal of the East European regimes - Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia - have given more scope for individual non-party activity. Of late, winds of change are blowing over Poland and Hungary and the progressive reform measures are most likely to satisfy the student community in such countries.

Student activists in European Communist countries are in one important aspect different from their American and West European counterparts. They share with their parents and elders the oppression and bureaucratisation of the same totalitarian system. Thus there is less of a generational conflict. Lewis S. Feuer aptly observes: "With such a shared experience student activists in communist countries are not moved to agitate for 'student power'; what they seek are liberties for all, not the elitist's status which attracts Western European student activists".

46. Feuer, Lewis, op.cit., p.311.
In other Communist countries such as Cuba and Vietnam, students have provided both the initial leadership and a large part of the mass base. The Communist party of Cuba was founded after a massive student demonstration in the University of Havana and Castro Movement developed from student activities in the same University.47

The Vietnamese Communist movement was, to a great extent, the offshoot of student movement in that country. Under Ho Chi Minh's inspiring leadership, student activists played a vanguard role in resisting American intervention and finally succeeded in achieving the unification of North and South Vietnam. Student politics in such Communist countries, where the regime is engaged in achieving political stability and economic advancement, are rarely opposed to the policies of the party and government.

C. Student Politics in the Third World.
   (Non-Communist Developing Nations)

Students constitute one of the most vocal and modernised segments of the population in the developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. They constitute a significant proportion of the activist elements in their respective societies and as such play an important role in political life, Notwithstanding the small percentage of

student population in the developing nations,"students are among the few modern and politically conscious elements in their society". They are in a real sense a 'presumptive elite', which is most likely to man key positions in society and to play a significant role in the modernisation of traditional society.

Student political activism remains a crucial issue for third world universities and frequently for political systems as well. Students in third world countries continue to be politically active and involved whereas students in the developed West are in a mood of 'retreat' since the 1970s. "In 1980s, the contrast between continued political activism among students in the third world and relative quiet in the industrialised nations of Western Europe and North America is dramatic". Student activism contributes to social change in the third world and focusses public attention on major issues that might otherwise be ignored by the political system.

Student politics in the third world countries is governed by several factors, namely, historical traditions, political situation, academic environment and sociological currents. These variables contribute to variations in the nature and scope of student activism in national context.


Many developing nations have highly articulated traditions of student participation in and sometimes leadership of political events. Student participation in freedom struggle has legitimated their participation in national politics. Despite governmental attempts to lessen their legitimacy in the post-independence period, students continue to remain a powerful force in national political life. Students have also been historically involved in cultural and linguistic reform movements and have been a key element in shaping the cultural tradition of the modern period. In Latin America students have participated in political affairs for generations and they remain active participants in the governance of the universities.

Student political activism in most third world countries is directly related to broader political issues and trends. In addition to preparing themselves for future roles in public life, "they play a significant part in the political life of their countries even during their studenthood. The intensity of the university students' political activity is, in some sense, a measure of the failure of the university as an academic community".50 Much before the dramatic Berkeley revolt of 1964, student movements had shaken or dislodged a number of governments in the developing areas. The roster of governments, whose downfall was associated


The political environment of a nation has a significant bearing on student political activism. In the absence of effective competing political forces and established institutional structures, students in the new nations play a crucial role in politics. Students take politics seriously partly because it affects the academic system very directly and partly because they are conscious of their unique role in society. The political situation in most of the new nations are far from satisfactory. Many of them have suffered from bouts of instability and encountered major political crisis after independence. The euphoria generated by visions of independence during liberation struggles has petered out by the stark realities of crisis-ridden situations in the post independence period. Situations of political fluidity, political corruption, administrative inefficiency and gross inequality have had an unsettling effect on students and have forced them into the vortex of national politics.
Students live and work in educational institutions and the academic environment has an important influence on student activism. The University, based on universalistic values, is one of the modernising elements in largely traditional societies. "Education is only a sub-system of the society. Its linkage with the stratification system and the polity and economy introduced various complexities impairing thereby the efficacy of education". An important source of student protest in the developing world may be found in the dichotomy between the more progressive and more cosmopolitan outlook of the educated younger groups and the less educated, more traditional older age groups. Students have fought for such modern values as academic freedom, university autonomy, open and merit system of recruitment, greater political freedom and economic and social modernisation. Further, in many countries, "the sub-culture of the university (and of intellectuals generally) is frequently an oppositional sub-culture which examines carefully and critically the society of which it is a part". Quite a large number of student agitations in tradition bound societies has been in response to the strains of modernisation. "The quality of a nation's modernising experience......is a

52. See Altbach, P.G., Student Politics in the Third World, op. cit.
critical factor in student politics".  

The institutional milieu does play a significant role in student politics. Much of the student frustration in the third World countries grows out of shortages and deficiencies of an academic nature with scarce resources and an ever expanding educational network. Developing nations are unable to provide ideal conditions of life and study for students. Again, "the poor prospects of employment following the degree are fundamental to the insecurity of the university youth. Since the intellectual and human values of education do not interest most of the students and the pursuit of learning is rare, the dim practical prospects further the demoralisation and alienation of the students".  

Thus most of the student protest activities have been campus based and stimulated by local issues. Universities in many third world nations are located in the capital cities and student protest can be seen and felt at the seat of government. The academic system which permits long gaps between examinations allows more time for students to get involved in protest politics.

The sociological variables influence student political activism. Student politics is a minority phenomenon


since the majority of students are apolitical. It is observed that university students come from the upper class and middle class families in almost every third world country. Students are generally not typical representatives of their national populations. Compared to the general population university students come from relatively affluent background which gives them a certain confidence in their future social roles. Student activists tend to come disproportionately from students in the social sciences and humanities and very rarely from professional studies. Student movements are generally assumed to be leftist in orientation and nationalist in direction. However, some campus activist movements in Asia and the Islamic world are rightist and conservative in orientation.

Discussion of student politics in the developing nations may broadly be grouped under three heads, namely, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Since India needs a special treatment in our context, we propose to discuss the Indian situation separately.

Student political activism in Latin America is well publicized and with good reason. During the past several years nearly every country in the region has encouraged some form of student activism. Of all national and regional student groups, the students of Latin America have
been most significant politically for the largest period of time. Student activism in Latin America has been the most continuous in contemporary history and 'Latin America probably harbours the politically most active and powerful body of university students in the world'\textsuperscript{55}

Students in Latin America have alternated in their concerns between the campus and the realms of national politics. "It has been argued that the greater significance of radical student politics in Latin America reflects characteristics of national political structure. In conditions of political tension where the existing adult elites, counter-elites are badly organised and ineffectual, student political organisations are likely to be important."\textsuperscript{56} The Cardoba Manifesto of 1918 marks the large scale entry of university students into national politics, when the students of the university of Cardoba in Argentina presented a manifesto demanding university autonomy and student participation in university decision making through 'Cogobierno' (student membership in all university committees and governing bodies). A subsequent meeting of the Argentinian students' union made eight further demands which were considered as central to the academic reform movement: optional attendance, abolition of religious restrictions on content of curriculum and


appointments to the university posts, financial assistance to students, and social orientation to the university organisation. Within the next few years demand for university reforms was voiced throughout Latin America - in Peru, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico and Costa Rica. The reform movement politicised university life in Latin American countries. In point of fact, much of the change in the university system has been rather piecemeal and has failed to alleviate student frustrations and grievances.

In much of Latin America the student movements have assailed the traditional oligarchic elements in the society, the military and the church, for resisting economic and social modernisation. As Robert E. Scott observes: "In well over half of Latin America... University politics already are an important political force, for the pressures of the society have carried the students past the stage of recruitment into that of involvement in national policy question".

The most significant role of the Latin American students continues to be their deep involvement in the political life of their nations. Students have been "a major force in opposing and overthrowing rightist and military dictatorships throughout the region." In the late 50s Fidel

57. See Halliday, Fred, op.cit., p.289.
Castro became the symbol of student political activism in Latin America. Students resorted to guerrilla warfare and other means of violence to achieve a general social revolution. They played an important role in the events which led to the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes of Perón, Rosas Pinilla and Peróz Jiménez in Argentina, Colombia, and Venezuela respectively. During 1966 many of the larger Latin American republics witnessed open and protracted clash between governmental forces and student revolutionaries. Student guerrilla warfare challenging the regimes became a reality in most of the countries – Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Fidel Castro's capture of political power in Cuba through a movement actively supported by students became a model for student activists throughout the continent.

Most of the Latin American nations are yet to achieve national integration, political stability, universalistic values, economic growth, and a broad consensus about the legitimacy of their governments. Students, as the most enlightened and articulate section of the nation, in a continent where the masses are sunk in political apathy and the traditional elites resist demands for democratisation and social justice, are most likely to continue to be a force of change
both on and off campus. In the 1980s, there has been a
trend towards democratisation in Argentina, Brazil and Chile
and students continue to occupy the centre stage of the
political system.

Student politics in most parts of the African
continent under colonial rule has had a notable tradition
of participation in national liberation struggles. Students
from privileged background studied in metropolitan centres
of London and Paris and were exposed to modern ideas. During
colonial rule, nationalist student organisations were set up
by African students overseas and when they returned to their
respective countries, they participated in and sometimes led
nationalist movements.

In the North African countries of Morocco, Tunisia
and Algeria under French colonial rule, students played a
vanguard role in the nationalist struggle. After independence
Moroccan students union fought for the abolition of the
authoritarian regime. Casablanca riots in 1965 were
suppressed by the regime with brutal force. In Algeria,
national freedom was achieved only after a violent and
protracted fight against the French in which students took
an active part. Students in Tunisia and Algeria were in
greater touch with the regime after independence and as such
they were less anti-establishment.

60. For the Organisation and Trends of Student Movements
in such countries, see Moore, Clement, H. and Hochschild,
Arlier, "Student Unions in North African Countries", in
In the tropical African countries which acquired their independence through a gradual transfer of power from their imperial masters, university students were much less politicised as a group. In Ghana under N. Krumah, a pro-Communist, students opposed the regime, demanding greater freedom within the university and political life. Students in South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia have fought against apartheid policy and interference in academic affairs. With the establishment of majority rule in Rhodesia things have changed for the better while South African black and coloured peoples continue to reel under the policy of discrimination followed by the White minority regime. Students all over Africa have raised powerful protest against South Africa's policy of racial discrimination and political repression. Indeed, anti-apartheid activism has moved from schools and universities into broader black society. There is an element of economic survival and patriotism present in most of the pre-industrial countries of Africa and student youth in countries like Kenya and Tanzania are deeply committed to the future of their nation.

Student participation in the liberation struggles of a large number of Asian countries forms an important chapter of Asian history in the twentieth century. Many patriotic students joined the mainstream of freedom movements and

A generation of political leaders were trained in such movements. The tradition of active political participation in freedom struggles has continued in the post-independence period and students continue to be politically important.

In the 'revolutionary' sixties the political power of students assumed gigantic proportion in the political turmoils in Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Burma, Iran and Turkey. The South Korean student revolution of April, 1960 precipitated a mass uprising that contributed to the downfall of Syngman Rhee. "To be sure Korean students were alienated and frustrated by university conditions, but the greatest disenchantment stemmed from their realization of a sharp discrepancy existing between what they learn about democratic system and heroes and what they actually witnessed under Syngman Rhee". In the late 80s, South Korean students helped force their country's transition to democracy. "Disillusioned by the failure of the opposition parties to defeat the military backed President Rho Tae Woo, the students now seem to be rallying to the banner of a militant though somewhat naive nationalism with calls for the reunification of the two Koreas and touches of Xenophobia, much of it directed against the U.S.A." The demand for the reunification of two Koreas is more vehemently


expressed in Communist North Korea as it wants to share in the South's booming prosperity. For the present Koreans on either side of the ideological divide want an open border and free trade.

In Thailand the student uprising of October 1973 was, in actual fact, a re-emergence of the urban left wing movement after a long period of severe repression. Thai students have been at the forefront of protest against military rule for more than a decade.

Burma experienced revolt and civil war after independence. Burmese students clashed violently with the soldier rulers in 1962 and 1963 following the military take over of 1962. Despite heavy suppression of student political activity, student activists used campus issues as a means for uniting student opposition to the military government. A minority of student radicals had chosen to leave the university and joined their ethnic groups in underground movements.

In the late eighties nothing less than a people's revolution has overtaken Burma, which forced the exit of Ne Win. The demonstration against Burma's militaristic-Socialistic power structure has been led by Burma's main student union. Students have been successful in tapping deep


popular resentment against the country's chronic economic ills. The revolutionaries in Burma are asking for the total overthrow of the Ne Win regime, for the trial and execution of his successor, U Sien Lwin, for the formation of a transitional people's government to draw up a new constitution and call for free elections on a multi-party basis.

Indonesian students played an active part in the freedom struggle. After independence they remained generally politically quiescent until the 30th September movement, 1965 when the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) made an attempt to seize power. This coup precipitated students' entry into national politics. Students were instrumental in the ouster of President Sukarno and in foiling the attempt of Communists to capture power in the open struggle for succession. Since then there has been an uneasy alliance between the students and the Indonesian Army led by President General Suharto which controls political power. Indonesian students have launched anti-corruption campaigns and have become critical of the 'militarism' in government. In the absence of well organised and effective parties and interest groups, students continue to get a hearing on broad range of issues by powers that be.

Philippines and Malaysia have experienced intense youth and student activism. Philippine students have succeeded in considerably politicising the masses. Students of Malaysia played a crucial role in the events which led to the downfall of the corrupt and authoritarian regime of Ferdinand Marcos and the installation of a democratic government under Mrs. Korazon Aquino.

Student politics in Pakistan has been largely influenced by the protracted instability of the political environment. Student politics has been characterised by political protest closely connected with political instability, military rule and the threat of external enemy. Students had dramatised the tyranny of Ayub dictatorship and later were joined by opposition politicians and the public in voicing dissent against military rule. Like many other Islamic countries there is considerable sentiment in the Pakistani universities for an Islamic revivalist political movement. Infighting among leftist groups in Pakistani campuses has weakened the left movement's challenge to rightist reactionary elements. Pakistan's return to parliamentary democracy in November 1988 owes, in no small measure, to the active support given by students and youth to the Pakistan Peoples' Party under the leadership of Mrs. Benazir Bhutto.


Bangladesh, as former East Pakistan, has long been the scene of student protest politics against the hegemony and economic exploitation by West Pakistan. The liberation struggle in East Pakistan in the early 1970s brought students and youth to the forefront of a brutal struggle against the Pakistan army. Youth formed the backbone in such fighting organisations as the 'Mukti Bahini', 'Rakhi Bahini' as well as other guerrilla groups. With a brief experiment of parliamentary democracy under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh has came back to military rule and students continued to play an oppositional role against military regimes.

Turkish students were the most effective political force in deposing Sultans, and plotting revolutions between 1850 and 1920. Student movement in 1960 initiated the series of events which led to the overthrow of Menderes government. Since then students continue to be active in national politics.

In Iran, students of the University of Teheran took leadership in constantly flaunting the authority of the repressive regime under the Shah. Youth and students played a key role in the Iranian revolution led by Ayotollah Khomeni which brought the downfall of the Shah.

Students demonstrated against the government of President Abdul Rahman Aref of Iraq in June 1968. Left wing elements engineered a coup on July 17, 1978 on the ground that President Aref's government was one of 'corruption and thievery'.

This short but representative analysis of student politics in third world countries calls for a comparison between student political activism in the third world and in the industrialised nations.

Students in the third world nations have been successful in stimulating political change while among industrialised countries, France and Japan, came close to overthrowing governments.

In the third world, students have had a much more direct influence on society by forcing social and governmental change while students in the industrialised nations have been able to influence major policy indirectly by raising issues and stimulating debates.

The absence of established political institutions in a number of third world nations enables well organised groups such as the student community who have direct impact on politics.

The tradition of students' involvement in the national liberation struggles in third world countries
has imparted legitimacy to student political involvement, "while in the West student political involvement is seen as an aberration and an illegitimate intrusion in politics".

Third World students are much more "of an elite group than their compreers in industrialised nations and they have a consciousness of their elite position".71

In the relative absence of effectively functioning democratic political system, poverty, illiteracy and gross inequality and poor communication, students in the third world countries are often seen as spokesmen for a broader population. They act as 'conscience' of their society. Such moral authority is seldom available to students in the industrialised countries. The basic conditions for student political activism in the third world remain and it is expected that students will continue to be politically involved in both the on campus and off campus arena.

71. For details see Altbach, Philip, G., "Student Politics in the Third World", op. cit.