CHAPTER I

STUDENT MOVEMENTS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Student activism has had a crucial impact in many countries. To mention, Turkey, South Korea, South Vietnam, Ecuador, Thailand, and other nations in which student demonstrations brought down governments to indicate the importance of student power. Student activism has a long historical tradition. In Europe, students were key elements in the revolution of 1848 in Germany and Austria. The early Russian Revolutionary movement of 19th century consisted to a substantial degree of university students, and students in France were involved in many radical political movements. However, 1960s was a turbulent decade which experienced an upsurge of student movements throughout the world with hardly any country escaping the wrath of this generation. It is difficult to generalize student protest activities at a global level on account of the diversity of the sources and causes of student movements and their consequences and impact on societies. In this chapter an attempt is being made to discuss the various aspects of student politics under three broad groups of countries, namely, the advance capitalist countries, the socialist countries and the third world (developing countries).
The first manifestation of student political involvement in the U.S.A was the rise of the student-base civil rights movement in the South. Student involvement of civil rights for Negros grew steadily following the desegregation decision of the American Supreme Court in 1954. Students launched civil disobedience against unjust laws as the most effective way of achieving the supremely moral ideal of equal rights enshrined in the Constitution.

A New Left Movement swept through the universities of most of the advance western countries. It began in the early 1960s and its first overt manifestation in the U.S.A. was at Berkeley in 1964. The birth of the New Left in the U.S.A. is said to have been due to the civil rights movement, the absence of a broad based left-wing political party and students' antipathy to the 'multiversity'.

The experiences of the civil rights movement made the Berkeley revolt (at the University of California) possible in the fall of 1964. No other student uprising in the United States has ever impressed the public imagination so much. Berkeley reflected the long-standing student discontent with the "depersonalization" of under-graduate education at the large State universities. Student radicals did not confine themselves to the right of free speech on the campus or academic issues but were able to create big issues.
The opposition to the Vietnam War following the decision of the American Government in February 1965 to escalate American participation was a major source of student activism on many campuses. The faculty has lent support to the students in their opposition to a war in which the world's greatest power was engaged in a war of attrition in a small under-developed country. Student agitations at Columbia University in 1968 were stimulated particularly by "Columbia's participation in the Secret Institute for Defence Analysis. Students objected to Columbia's lack of help to its surrounding neighborhood which happens to be one of America's worst Negro ghettos and attacked the University's "ivory tower" attitude to community." During the Cambodian incursion in May 1970, American campuses also demonstrated opposition to the war through protest movements.

Black students have supported the demand for Black power in the U.S.A. "On University campuses they demanded recruitment of more Negro students and faculty and a curriculum that predominantly featured Afro-American history and experience."  


Student movement in the United States played a significant role in vital aspects of American life and society. Its role in the civil rights struggle in the South was commendable. It had focused attention on the problems of the large universities through the Berkeley revolt and had started a foreign policy debate on Vietnam which led to the ultimate withdrawal of American troops.

The L.S.E. affair in Britain was a 9-day sit-in (March 1967) beginning with a demand for the withdrawal of the suspension orders against two student leaders. Prior to this, the British New Left Movement as it existed between 1957 and 1962 had its origins in the political events of the Suez Canal crisis of 1956 and campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the years after 1958. The revolt at L.S.E. was based on eight demands relating to university structure, reform and change in student status through executive responsibility. This was followed by occupation and administration by the students themselves in the other universities of Hull, Hornsey and Essex. Student troubles also hit Oxford University when angry undergraduates besieged university administration offices on June 3, 1968, demanding political freedom.

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Student radicals were been influenced by the writings of Herbert Marcuse, Mao Tse Tung and Che Guevara. There was a general sense of disillusionment, among university students, about the Vietnam War, particularly the Wilson Government's support for American policy. The issue of South Africa and Rhodesia also agitated students in Britain. Students fought for academic reforms demanding adequate student participation in the decision-making process, enough contact with faculty, courses in touch with modern-day reality and less number of examinations.

The May Movement of 1968 in France led initially by students and teachers was turning point in French politics which debilitated the Gaullist administration and led to the ultimate fall of De Gaulle.\(^4\) The May militancy among students was triggered off by their condition as students. Dissatisfaction stemmed from overcrowding, disciplinary rules in the halls of residence, inadequate grants, lack of cultural and other facilities. The students of Nanterre, a model campus in the outer suburb of Paris, led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit went to the historic court-yard of the Sorbonne in the heart of Paris to protest against the closing of their campus. When the police was called by the university administration to clear the buildings, about

sixty thousand students fought violently in the streets of Paris and
demonstrations of solidarity took place throughout France. Unlike
other revolts of students, it gave primacy to the mobilization of the
working class. Students took the movement to shops, factories and
work places. Nearly a million Parisian workers stopped work and
came out into the streets to march with the students on May 13 to
demonstrate against the Gaullist Government. The General
Confederation of Labour declared a general strike.

The May Revolt involved the whole fabric of society. It exposed
the structural contradictions in an affluent capitalist society. The
radical students considered representative democracy a failure. They
argue for "some kind of utopia where every-body votes on everything
that affects them."

No student movement arose in West Germany for about 20
years after the Nazi surrender in 1945. In 1965, however, mass
demonstrations were launched by thousands of students against
insufficient public funds available for higher education. The new
German student movement raised the typical issue of
'democratization of the university.' The Free University of West Berlin
was "the chronic centre of radical German student activity."6 It had

6 Joseph, A., Califano Jr., The Student Revolution: A Global Confrontation (New York,
been a bastion of the German students radicals, called the SDS (Socialist German Students' League). The SDS consisting of a dedicated and farsighted minority of revolutionaries formed the hardcore of the student movement. In the spring of 1967, Berlin students demonstrated against Vice-President Hubert Humphreey of the United States and a spokesman of the Vietnam War. They also demonstrated against the Shah of Iran whose regime was characterized by repression.

Italian students characterized the student revolution as a global confrontation. They attacked the operational values of modern society and "the corrupt and non-responsive institutions of the Establishment." They condemned with equal vigour the imperialist policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union as exemplified in American intervention in Vietnam and Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia; American economic investment in Western Europe and Russian economic domination of Eastern Europe, the NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Like their counterparts in other Western European countries, Italian students also fought for university reforms including relevant courses, greater contact with professors and more student power in

\[6\] Ibid., pp.27-29.
university affairs. In the academic year 1967-68 student revolt swept the campuses- beginning with the seizure of Turin University, nineteen of the thirty three State universities were affected. More than any other country the focus of the Italian student movement was "reform of the content of higher education."

The fascist regime installed in Spain during the 1930s was hostile to the intellectual class and continued to neglect all levels of education. The emergence of the Spanish student revolt in the 1960s was related both to the crisis of Franco's Fascist regime and to deplorable university conditions. Comparative calm on the Spanish campuses was broken in 1965. The demonstration of February 15, 1965, in Madrid was occasioned when the authorities banned lectures at the university on "Intellectuals and peace" and "The Christian Vision of Alienation." Students also demanded modernization of the university through much needed reforms.

In February 1967, students in Madrid demonstrated to demand workers' representation on a committee deliberating a change in trade Union Law. The new student-worker solidarity was consummated by the three days of national struggle declared for 1-3 May 1968.
The Portuguese student movement has been characterised by Lewis S. Feuer as a "revolt against gerentocratic fascism." Portuguese students, of whom almost 90 per cent came from the economically privileged classes, revolted against "fascist dictatorship of old men and secret police." They protested against the waging of several colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique. They also demanded student self-government, academic freedom and university reform.

Student politics in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland was marked by a low level of activism and a low degree of "confrontation politics." Lipset writes: "The stability and legitimacy of the established political structures have discouraged student activism, and national politics is not generally seen as a legitimate domain of student concern."^8

In Sweden students planned to invade Stockholm in May 1968 to demand increased aid to under-developed countries. They held sympathetic protest demonstrations which erupted into violence on the night of May 25-26, 1968, in the wake of the May Revolt of French

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students. In Norway students demonstrated to demand state loans to all students irrespective of parent's economic status.

In sharp contrast to Scandinavian student politics, students politics in Japan is marked by a high degree of activism and 'confrontation politics. Student unrest at Japanese Universities had "combined political dissent with educational complaints in a manner similar to other countries". The educational complaints directed at the university included overcrowding, irrelevant courses, lack of contact with professors and inadequate student participation in the decision-making process.

Much more than the university-oriented targets of the Japanese radical students their involvement in national political affairs had given them prominence not only in their own country but in the whole world. Anti-Americanism had been the major source of student political activism in Japan since the Second World War. The most famous and publicised political revolt of Japanese students took place in 1960 against the renewal of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Prior to this, different sectors of the student movement had been active in all the major political struggles of the post-second world war

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9 P.G. Altbach, *op.cit.*, n.1, p.11.
period: against the Mac Arthur Purge in 1950, against the Subversive Activities Prevention Law in 1958.  

Fred Halliday wrote: "The Japanese student movement played a historic role in any world perspective. It pioneered mass revolutionary action in an industrialized 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."  

The advance and developing non-capitalist countries which have adopted Marxian Socialism as their political system and way of life according to their own interpretations have also not been immune to youth and student revolts and movements. Despite the highly centralized political systems in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe, student activism has been a significant political phenomenon. Student unrest in various communist nations "has been based at least in part on the differences which young people perceive between the theory and practice of communism."  

Soviet Russia has a long tradition of revolutionary student movement stretching back to the 1960s when several thousand

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10 Fred Holiday, *op.cit.*, n.4, pp.294-298.
students inspired by selfless idealism and feelings of guilt and responsibility for the backward people movement.

In the post-Stalinist period the powerful speech of Nikita Khrushchev of February 1956 highlighting the evils done by Stalin occasioned a moral crisis in Soviet society. The criticism of certain unsavory features of the Soviet society and way of life by students and intellectuals goes back to the "de-stalinisation campaign."

Despite the absence of major student revolt in the Soviet Union in the post-war period, students along with intellectuals played a major role in demanding reforms of the Soviet society, insisting on more freedom and greater intellectual integrity.¹³

Chinese students played a crucial role in the downfall of the Manchu dynasty at the turn of the 20th century. They backed Sun Yat Sen and later Ch'en Tu hsiu in their efforts for modernization. Peking students heralded modern Chinese revolutionary politics on 4 May 1919 by launching a gigantic demonstration against Japanese imperialist pressure against China.

Students played an important role in undermining Chiang Kaishek and his Koumintang during the 1930s and in organizing a united resistance to the Japanese. In the fight between the

communists and the Koumintang, the student movement turned increasingly to the left and the post-second world war student activism resulted in the downfall of Chiang's nationalist government and the victory of the communists. During the early fifties, the Chinese communist Party promoted student political action in a series of mass movements controlled by the party and Youth League. Chinese students entered dramatically into the political life of the country by playing a vanguard role in the Great Proletarian cultural Revolution of 1966. With the official launching of the Red Guard Movement on 18 August 1966 University students came on the national political scene. Millions of students were involved 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 campus but with the emergence of the Red Guards, prominent party leaders became the target of attack. Through the Cultural Revolution students were able to "achieve experience of mass political conflict."\(^\text{14}\)

Students of Czechoslovakia were in the forefront of demands for liberalization and democratization in that country. In 1967 students protested against bad living conditions and political repression by the communist regime. Student activism and protest were a key

\(^\text{14}\) Fred Holiday, \textit{op.cit.}, no.4, pp.299-303.
factor in the decline of the old Stalinists and in the inauguration of liberal measures.

Yugoslav students were less disaffected with their society on account of the liberal government with a more decentralized socialist economy under President Tito. In June 1968 the students of Belgrade University engaged in a 'sit-in' which lasted eight days. The immediate issues were: poor food, crowded dormitories, poor instruction, etc. By the time the sit-in ended with the personal intercession of President Tito, the students were raising the deeper the generational issues, with the slogan "Down with the Red-bourgeoisie". Students resented the monopoly of the older generation of ill-educated persons on the best jobs.

In other communist countries such as Cuba and Vietnam students provided with the "initial leadership and a large part of the base." The Communist party of Cuba was founded after a massive student demonstration in the University of Havana and the Castro movement developed from student activities in the same university. The Vietnamese communist movement was, to a large extent, the offshoot of student movement in that country. Students, in these communist countries where the regime was engaged in achieving

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16 S.M. Lipset, op.cit., n.8, p.12.
political stability and economic progress, students rarely opposed the policies of the party and the government. Student politics in such countries were passing through a period comparable to the post-war period student politics in East European countries marked by initial jubilation and enthusiasm and support for the regime.

As for developing countries are concerned, University students had been one of the most important elements which had fostered the ideas of nationalism and national unity in largely traditional population. Some nations were created in part through the efforts of university - trained intellectuals who looked to European nationalists, such as Mazzini, Garibaldi and Lenin, as their role model.

Students constitute a vital and vocal segment of the population of the new States of Asia, Africa and Latin America. They constitute "a significant proportion of the rebellious elements in their respective societies. As such they play an important part in political life."17

In many of these new nations, students have had a long and highly articulated tradition of participation in, and sometimes leadership of, political events. In Latin America, students participated in political affairs and have had a constitutional voice in university administration for generations. In may Asian and African countries

17 Ibid., p.34.
students were in the vanguard of the nationalist movements and many of the student leaders achieved political leadership in the post-Independence governments. Students from upper class families experienced exposure to and imbedded new ideas through study abroad. "Thus youth movements in Asia (and elsewhere e.g., Africa) became in a sense the pioneers of Europeanization in their acceptance of progressive and radical standards of morality and social life as opposed to the traditionalism of the elders."¹⁸ Alongside this acceptance was an inherent rejection of European imperialism which lent content to their zealous nationalism. Since the colonial masters allowed little freedom in terms of normal political activity, strikes, demonstrations and terrorism became major forms of political activity for students and the youth. "The political tradition then engendered has persisted into independence."¹⁹

Much before the dramatic events of the Berkeley student revolt of 1964, students were a key element in shaking or toppling of number of governments in the developing countries. The roster of governments whose downfall was associated with major student agitations between 1958 and 1966 is rather long and impressive:

Venezuela in 1958, Japan in 1960, South Korea in 1960, Turkey in 1960, South Vietnam in 1963, Bolivia in 1964, and Indonesia in 1966. A number of governments in the Third World have been shaken by violent outbursts of students. There has hardly been a political crisis in the new nations in which students have not taken an active part. Hence Student movements in the Third World countries have been a crucial variable in political developments.20

Among the factors facilitating student political activism in most of the developing nations the political situation of the country has been the most important. Nations who have emerged from colonial bondage have had a long and glorious tradition of student political participation. After independence quite a large number of them have faced political crisis and instability. Such situations of political fluidity have had an unsettling effect on students; concern for academics and have drawn them into the vortex of national politics.

The university, based on universalistic values, is one of the "primary modernizing elements in largely traditional societies." There is a wide gap between social and political expectations created by university education and the traditional, particularistic values both of the ruling elite and the general public. Students have fought for

modern values of academic, freedom, university autonomy, economic and social modernization, and greater liberty in political life generally. Much of the agitation in tradition-bound and impoverished societies has been in response to the strains of modernization.

Yet another important source of student activism in developing nations has centred around the university and the educational system. The aim of many protest movements had been the protection of the interests of students as students. The university system in most of the developing nations is outmoded and unrealistic in the face of ever increasing numbers and pervasive commitments to mass education. Much of the student frustration grows out of shortages and deficiencies of an academic nature-books, library facilities, teachers, laboratories, classrooms, recreational facilities and residential accommodation. The poor conditions of life and study into which the students are thrown are indications of economic backwardness and scarcity of resources with which developing nations are beset. Again "the poor prospects of employment following the degree are fundamental to the insecurity of the university youth. Since the intellectual and humane values of education do not interest most of the students and the pursuit of learning is rare, the dim practical prospects further the demoralization and alienation of the
students. Academic issues account for the great majority of demonstrations and strikes in such countries. Hence violent outbursts of students have generally been directed toward persons and objects within the university itself.

Discussion of student politics in the developing nations may be broadly classified under three heads, namely, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

"Latin America probably harbors the politically most active and powerful body of university students in the world," writes Joseph Fisher. In the past several year, nearly every country in the region had experienced some sort of student protest activity that disrupted the process of higher education and affected national politics. The Cordoba Manifesto of 1918 marks the large scale entry of university students into national politics when the students of Cordoba in Argentina presented a manifesto demanding university autonomy and the introduction of student participation in academic affairs through Cogobierno (student membership in all University Committees and Governing bodies). In addition to the demands of the Cordoba Manifesto a subsequent meeting of the Argentinian

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22 Ibid., p.40.
Students' Union made eight further demands which were considered as central to the reform movement.\textsuperscript{23}

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. In point of fact, much of the change that has occurred in most Universities of Latin America has been rather piecemeal and has failed to alleviate student frustrations and insecurities. The academic environment with part-time educators, easy examinations and low academic requirements was far from being conducive to prepare students to operate in a real world. Within a short time the bright prospects of the Latin American student movement were largely distorted. "The slogans of 'autonomy' and 'co-government' became the tools of a growing student anti-intellectualism used to advance the selfish, narrow aims of a student elite."\textsuperscript{24} But despite the limited nature of its success in changing the University, the Reform movement of 1918 politicized the students in many Latin American countries.

In much of Latin America the student movements have had more important task; it was the 'striking force' of the intellectual elite

\textsuperscript{23} Fred Holiday, op.cit., n.4, p.289.

\textsuperscript{24} Lewis S. Fever, op.cit., n.7, p.232.
in its conflict with the traditional oligarchic elements in the society, the military and the church, for resisting economic and social modernization. In a continent cursed with military dictatorships, foreign domination, illiteracy, curable disease, hunger, police thuggery and government corruption, "the students were the intellectual’s mobile battalions; heroic, idealistic, inspiring, they were the force most readily available to challenge and withstand the regiments of military dictators."\textsuperscript{25}

In the late fifties Fidel Castro became the symbol of student political activism in Latin America. David Spencer wrote: "The Cuban Revolution radicalized Latin American student politics and changed the nature of radical student political activity."\textsuperscript{26} Guerilla warfare and violence became the admired means of student movements to achieve a general social revolution. One of the most stirring epics has been that of the Venezuelan students who were instrumental in the overthrow of the dictator Peroz Jimenez in 1958. During 1966 many of the larger Republics witnessed open clashes between government forces and student guerillas. In Ecuador, a military junta fell on account of a general strike called by students in retaliation for military attacks upon them. Student guerilla warfares challenging the regimes

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p.232.
\textsuperscript{26} Quoted in Lewis S. Fever, op.cit., n.7, p.246.
became a reality in most of the countries—Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Throughout Latin America, student activists were stirred to action by Che Guevara's call to the intellectuals to take the lead as guerillas. In Fidel Castro, Latin American students saw a model who took over political power in Cuba through a movement led and officered by students. In countries where the masses were sunk in political apathy, students played a vanguard role in revolutionary movements.

Political preoccupation of students resulted in disruption of the University's educational function. But this was indispensable in a continent moving on the road to social and economic modernization. With the advent of development, a new and unexpected responsibility was thrust upon the universities and their students. "This 'phantom' function not generally identified as a prime University responsibility, is that of providing leaders for nation-building." 27

Student politics in most part of Africa under colonical rule has had a glorious tradition of fighting for national independence. Study in metropolitan centres like London and Paris was very important for the students who were exposed to modern political and cultural

ideas. Nationalist student organizations were formed overseas and when they returned home they were ready to participate in and sometimes lead nationalist movements.

In the North African countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria under French colonial rule students played a crucial role in the nationalist struggle.28 After independence the Moroccan Student Union fought for the abolition of the regime. Casablanca riots in 1965 shook the regime and were suppressed with brutal force. The Student Union fought relentlessly against the traditional, feudal and despotic political elite. In Algeria freedom was achieved only after a protracted and violent struggle and "national liberation was an intensely politicizing experience," for the students. After independence students in Tunisia and Algeria were in greater touch with the regime in power and hence student activism is much less anti-government than in Morocco with its feudal system and continuing academic grievances.

Donald K. Emmerson wrote: "In the tropical African countries that acquired their independence through a gradual transfer of power from the metropole, university students were comparatively much
less politicized as a group."29 In Ghana under Nkrumah, a pro-Communist, students took a position in opposition to the regime, demanding greater liberty within the Universities and political life generally. Universities in Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and other countries have been scenes of student protest activity on various issues.

The widespread and selfless involvement of students in national politics forms a glorious chapter of Asian history in the 20th century. In a large number of Asian countries under colonial rule, University students provided leadership to nationalist movements and a generation of political leaders were trained in these student movements. The tradition of student political participation has continued in the post-independence period, "although there are indications that as political life becomes increasingly institutionalized and participation is extended to broader segments of the population, the importance of student movements will diminish. For the present, however, they remain powerful forces in many areas".30

In the turbulent sixties, in the revolutions and political turmoils in South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Burma, Iran and Turkey, the

political power of students assumed national proportions. In South Korea, students braved bullets from the military and in large measure contributed to the abrupt down-fall of Syngman Rhee. The Korean student Revolution of April 1960 was "a spontaneous, open, and unplanned mass uprising." "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 learned about the democratic system and "heroes", and what they actually witnessed under Syngman Rhee." 31

The Burmese students clashed violently with the soldier-rulers in 1962 and 1963 consequent upon the military coup of 1962. Despite heavy suppression of student political activity, many support outlawed parties and guerrilla movements. 32 From overt action in the pre-independence days till 1962, the youths were engaged in clandestine activity against the regime. A minority of students have chosen to leave the Universities and join their ethnic groups in underground movements. Indonesian students were politically quiescent prior to the "30th September movement" (1965) when the

The communist party of Indonesia (PKI) attempted to seize power. The attempted coup was the catalyst, which triggered off students' entry into national politics. Students were instrumental in the ouster of Sukarno and in foiling the attempts of the communists to capture power in the open struggle for succession.

Philippines and Malaysia have also experienced intense student and youth action. With the death of four students in January 1970, in Philippines, students did not rested content and had succeeded in considerably politicising the masses. Political instability and the problem of governmental legitimacy continue to grip Pakistan. Student demonstrators played a leading role in dramatizing the tyranny of the Ayub regime. It was only after they highlighted the repression of the regime that opposition politicians and the general public began to express dissent. Student politics in Pakistan had primarily been characterized by political protests closely connected with political instability, military rule and the threat of an external enemy. Bangladesh had long experienced student unrest and its diverse manifestations, often accompanied

with police firings. The Bangladesh freedom struggle brought its youth and students to the forefront and involved them in a most violent and brutal conflict. They formed the majority in such fighting organizations as the Mukti Bahini and Rakhi Bahini as well as other guerrilla groups. The role of Turkish students in politics goes back to the 19th century. Particularly between 1850 and 1920, students were frequently the most active and effective political force. They deposed Sultans and plotted revolutions.36

The student movement in 1960 initiated the series of events which led to the overthrow of the Menderes government. The army, however, provided the final force.37 The ill-fated Menderes government had, by a series of restrictive laws, committed the cardinal error of alienating the University students and members of the faculties. Since then students continued to be active in national politics.

In Iran, during the regime of the Shah, students of the University of Teheran "a beehive of political forment" constantly flaunted the authority of the government despite the existence of a repressive military machine. There was a student demonstration in


37 Lewis S. Feuer, op.cit, no.7, p.178.
Iraq in June 1968, against the government of President Abdel Rahman Aref. This was followed by a bloodless coup on July 17, 1978 which was engineered by leftwing elements on the ground that President Aref's government was one of "corruption and thievery" run by a bunch of illiterates.

India has had a long and chequered history of student activism and revolt. Student participation in the Freedom Movement forms a glorious chapter of modern Indian history. At the same time from the point of authorities, "for over a century, student unrest has been one of India's most serious educational and political problems." Students continue to be politically active despite many changes in the focus, direction, intensity and character of their politics since Independence.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 can be treated as a landmark in the history of student political activism in India. Students of Calcutta's Eden Hindu Hostel burned Lord Curzon's effigy and boycotted examinations to protest against the partition of Bengal. During the next few years students of Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab were most active participants in national politics. Gandhi's non-cooperation movement of 1920 galvanized the Indian National Congress into a mass movement which attracted large numbers of

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students and youth into intense political struggle. Students provided much of the manpower for mass demonstrations and in some areas, they assumed the leadership of the freedom movement when Congress leaders were arrested. The first All-India College Students' Conference was held at Nagpur in December 1920 under the presidency of Lala Lajpt Rai to provide coordination for the growing student political movement. Similar national student conferences were held throughout the 1920s and helped to keep the spark of the student movement alive. During the 1930s the All India Student conferences provided Congressmen with leftist orientation with a platform and "the student movement was probably the most radical element in Indian political life during this period."39 "Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 involved students in many of the militant activities against the British Raj.

The first national organization of students was founded in 1936, with the formation of the All-India Students' Federation. The new organization addressed a host of academic demands to the seven State Governments that were then under Congress control. The all India Muslim Students' Federation, founded in 1937 under the auspices of the All India Muslim League was a blow to nationalist and radical AISF. Internal conflicts between communists and non-

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39 Ibid., p.144.
communists (nationalists) students over ideological issues led to a split in the AISF in 1940. In 1945 the nationalist group, with the support of the Gandhians and the Socialists formed the All India Student Congress. The highwater mark of student political participation in the national movement was achieved during 1942 "Quit India" struggle launched by the Congress. The period brought the mass of the student population into the mainstream of national politics. Student militancy stimulated by the "Quit India" struggle continued, although on a reduced scale, until the end of the Independence struggle. By and large student agitations during the freedom struggle had a noble and defined goal, namely, attainment of political freedom for the country. Despite the existence of a number of competing student organizations founded on ideological lines, the goal of national freedom was common for all groups of students.

There has been a dramatic transformation of the student movement since independence. With the achievement of independence, Congress leadership called upon students to depoliticize themselves by severing affiliation with political parties and harnessing their energy for constructive, nation-building activities. The Student Congress did dissolve itself and called for the
creation of a National Union of Students. The efforts of Nehru and Jayaprakash Narain for a depoliticized student movement failed mainly due to the suspicion of the opposition parties about the move of the Congress. As Weiner observes: "Eager to push students out of politics and into development work, Congress lost ground to the opposition parties, who in the meantime were winning student participation for electioneering work against the government and support for various movements against existing authorities."  

India is rather unique among Asian countries in having no massive student movement of an all India dimension after Independence. However, student strikes and agitations have rocked many Universities and shaken many State governments. While student unrest and 'indiscipline' of various kinds, related mostly to campus-oriented issues, occur in every State, some of the States have been affected by major student disturbances concerning broader political issues. West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamilnadu and Assam have experienced substantial student participation in politics at various levels.

41 Ibid., p.180.