CHAPTER – IV

REGIONAL CONFLICTS

India is a land of promises, there are no two opinions about it among the knowledgeable people. Its natural resources are the envy of many countries. Its manpower is as vast and staggering as it is intelligent, precious, diligent, creative, innovative and versatile. It has within its boundaries a diversity of races, cultures, customs, languages and dialectics with variety, immensity, worth, depth and possibilities.

Yet after decades of independence, with its own people deciding its destinies and framing its policies - one can see gaping holes all around, awaiting attention. It is the lack of peace and tranquility in the country which are necessary if it is to make progress in any sphere of activity. There is scant respect for human life and dignity. There is hardly a day when one can say that there are no riots, mini-wars, street fights, commotion, confusion and chaos in some part of the country or other. It keeps the entire administration busy trying to maintain a semblance of law and order, control the violent crowds, and prevent bloodshed and destruction of life and property. The final solution that any normal human being will suggest is only one: wipe out discriminations and hatred from the minds of our people and there will be peace, and the nation will advance with lightning speed.
Discriminatory affiliations are very strong in the traditional society. This raises an important question about the politics of identity in a modern nation-state, which is composite in nature. The Indian society is highly diverse and pluralistic. There is linguistic, cultural, religious and caste diversity. Each group emphasizes its own identity to mark itself out from other groups. In a society where distribution of political power and economic resources is highly uneven and monopolized by a few groups, such a situation plays a significant mobilisatory role. It is important to note that dynamics of modern nation building in a pluralistic society like that of India result in complex processes. Certain processes bring about consolidation of nationhood and others promote intense conflicts. The riots and conflicts are in several varieties and all are not designed to achieve the same objective. Some of the main conflicts in our society are discussed in this chapter.

Hindu-Muslim Conflicts:

Although there have been quite a few major threats to national unity since independence, emanating from various social, economic and cultural factors, the most persistent challenge to peace and order and promotion of good governance has been posed by Hindu-Muslim conflicts. The divide between these two communities has grown enormously over the years. Whereas this posed a most formidable challenge in the area of law enforcement, it also tested to the utmost the ability and dexterity of Indian

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politicians to handle its extremely deleterious impact on Indian society. Jawaharlal Nehru’s slogan of ‘unity through diversity’ as also the concept of a composite culture, failed to integrate the two communities in a firm concord of peace and harmony. Nor did the slogan succeed in effectively resolving the multiple complexities of a highly heterogeneous Indian society. As the schisms in Indian society became sharper and wider, a great deal of conflict and violence ensued, not only between Hindus and Muslims, but also several other social, religious and caste groups. All such happenings severely impeded national integration and tended to inhibit creative interaction between diverse groups, thus negating the entire significance of the concept of unity in, or through, diversity. As for Hindu-Muslim sectarian polarization and the determination of their mutual relations, the role of religion in shaping their worldview has been so profound as to almost completely block off mutual give-and-take at cultural or civilization levels.² The rural areas remained comparatively free from communal violence, probably because division of labour and economic deprivation, helped in promoting social accommodation. However, that claim too is no longer valid as more and more rural areas get pathologically infected with the virus of communalism.

As Muslim domination waned and high Muslim functionaries lost their power and influence, following the annexation of their territories, resentment and frustration in the community precipitated a series of violent

incidents. Among the more common causes of communal rioting were cow-slaughter and religious procession, playing music before mosques. In 1871, the Hindu festival of Ram Navami and Muslim day of mourning, Moharrum, coincided and led to riots in two UP towns. In 1893, major disturbances took place in Azamgarh (UP) over cow slaughter. Making the situation more inflammable, was the Hindu movement for the protection of the cow as against the Muslim custom of animal sacrifice. The cow-slaughter issue has been crucial, at least, since the medieval period of Indian history. Akbar and many other local rulers had prohibited killing of cows in their kingdoms. In 1847, the Panjab government banned cow-slaughter in Amritsar. In 1857, the last Mughal Emperor Bahadurshah Zafar also prohibited cow-slaughter in the territories he nominally controlled, a couple of months before he was deposed and deported to Myanmar by the British. Conflicting interpretations of the government order banning ‘all cow sacrifices’ led to serious riots, soon after, in UP, Bihar, the Gujarat region of the then Mumbai presidency and Mumbai city, taking a toll of 107 lives, with the largest number of casualties reported from Mumbai city. Elsewhere in India, riots took place in Malabar (Chennai Presidency) in 1873, 1885, 1894 and 1896, in the central provinces in 1889 and in Porbandar (Gujarat) in 1885. In the Panjab,
between 1881 and 1893, nine disturbances occurred, of which the Multan riot of 1881 was particularly severe.\footnote{Bayly, C. A., Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1989, pp. 335-8.}

While such riots did not form a regular feature of life in India in the-nineteenth century, the communal situation rapidly worsened in the twentieth century. Whether the birth of the Muslim League in 1906 and the provision for separate electorates under the Indian Councils Act of 1909, had anything to do with the abnormal rise in Hindu-Muslim tension is not clear. The memorandum submitted by the government of India to the Indian Statutory Commission\footnote{Indian Statutory Commission Report, 1930, Vol. IV, Part 1, pp. 97-107.} (popularly known as the Simon Commission) in 1930, caused communal riots in East Bengal in 1907, Peshawar in 1910, Ayodhya in 1912, Agra in 1913, Shahabad in 1917 and Kartarpur (Panjab) in 1918. The frequency and sweep of such riots further increased in the 1920s and nearly every province was affected. The Moplah rebellion of 1921 had strong communal overtones. Riots occurred in Malegaon (1921), Multan (1922), Lahore, Amritsar and Saharanpur (1923). The following year witnessed more outbreaks in Allahabad, Kolkata, Delhi, Jabalpur, Gulbarga-Kohat, Lucknow, Nagpur, Shahjehanpur, among others. From 1925, another issue namely religious conversions came to be added to the existing causes of conflict with the rise of new militant organizations of the Hindus - \textit{Shuddhi} and \textit{Sangathan} - spearheaded by the Arya Samaj, a Hindu resurgent movement. On the other side, Muslim organizations such as Tanzeem and Tabligh added to the scale of communal violence. There were
major riots in Kolkata and Mumbai in 1926 and 1928, respectively, leading to an unusually high toll of lives and damage to property. In Kolkata, in a series of three riots, 141 persons were killed and 1926 were injured; in Mumbai in 1928, the death toll was 117 while 719 were injured.6

The magnitude of the communal conflagrations in the 1930s and 1940s was even more alarming. The gulf that had always separated the two communities was gradually becoming unbridgeable. In the 1931 riots of Kanpur, 294 persons were killed and 2,529 injured. In the Mumbai riots of 1932, as many as 214 persons were killed and 2,686 injured; again in 1936, as many as 65 were killed and 509 injured. Taking into consideration, only the major riots between 1924 and 1940, the total number of persons killed was 1,175 and the injured 7,615. In the 1940s, the major riots were part of the movement for partition and the scale of violence enormous. By then, communal riots had become an instrument of politics.7 The short-lived alliance between the Congress and a section of Muslims during the Khilafat movement of 1920s actually proved counter-productive for Hindu-Muslim detente, in the long run. It also prompted Jinnah to further distance himself from the Congress. Ironically, Jinnah also criticized the move as injecting religion into an essentially secular movement. Obviously, violent sectarian conflicts had become a characteristic feature of Indian social and political discourse in the decades before independence. However, communal violence declined in a good measure after the end of British rule, in a way.

supporting the common belief in the British policy of divide and rule. Between 1947 and 1954, there were very few incidents of communal riots: only 20 in 1950 (11 of them in West Bengal), 7 in 1951, 12 in 1952 and 4 in 1953. In the following decade, too, the situation on the communal front remained under control and very few riots occurred. By 1964, however, the post-partition 'truce' between Hindus and Muslims seemed to have broken down. Evidently, mounting communal violence has kept pace with the deteriorating relations between the two communities. Each major riot widens the historical gulf between them and induces an increasing sense of insecurity among the vulnerable sections of each community, but especially among the minority Muslim population. The never-ending hostility between India and Pakistan over Kashmir and other sundry issues also add to the distrust between Hindus and Muslims. Most Hindus now tend to view every Muslim as a Pakistani sympathizer and a potential enemy.

Effective handling of communal riots calls for political initiative of a high order, which is often lacking. On their part, the police and the district administration have to assign a major part of their resources to contain the havoc caused by communal riots. Kashmir valley was free from communal flare-ups for a long time, though after the breakout of militancy, Hindus have increasingly been subjected to communal violence. Communal strife, which was essentially an urban phenomenon until very recently, has been fast spreading to rural areas also. An analysis of the relevant data shows that communal violence occurs in localities with mixed populations, where the proportion of the two groups is more or less balanced. There are fewer

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Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in Indian, op. cit., p. 384.
or no incidents in areas with small Muslim population or vice versa. Is there a definite and demonstrable correlation between the size of Muslim population in a district and the extent and magnitude of communal violence.  

All riots prior to the partition were blamed on the British policy of divide and rule. It is true that the British did try to divide Indians in order to consolidate their hold. But Indian elites both from amongst the Hindus as well as Muslims can not escape their own responsibility also by saying so. And now in free India, we have to take note of many other factors which have emerged on scene. The British “divide and rule” theory is no longer adequate explanation even as a legacy of the past, and is no more relevant at all. This theory should be buried now. It could at best be used for partial explanation of communal riots before partition.

Certain common features mark communal riots. For one, they are generally without sustained planning over a long period though, of late, an opposite trend is noticeable in some states. They mostly result from sudden and spontaneous causes. Since attitudes towards each other are already hardened, even a minor provocative act, will be enough to set off a chain of events, leading to a riot situation. Though acts of individual violence like stabbing, looting and burning of property are common, instances of mass mobilization with mobs numbering in hundreds, even thousands, engaging

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in pitched battles are seen to be proliferating in recent years. Frequently, groups of communally charged people, targeting weakly-defended localities of the other community, go on the rampage, defying police presence. People living in the midst of or close to areas predominantly inhabited by the 'other' community are the most endangered. Mosques, temples, shops and other business premises, private houses - all are fair game for the marauders. Although instances of compassion, courage and mutual support are not rare, sectarian riots always leave behind a legacy of bitterness, hostility, suspicion, anxiety, alienation and ill-will. It is this legacy, which should be a matter of deep concern to the Indian state and its law-enforcement machinery. Unlike in the pre-independence period, communal violence is not generally used as a political strategy, though lately Hindu fundamentalist organizations are using religious polarization between Hindus and Muslims, as an electoral tool to win elections, as happened in Gujarat in 2002. An increasing sense of despondency and frustration among the minority communities, combined with their growing loss of trust in the impartiality and neutrality of law enforcement administration, on the one hand, and the mounting tide of Hindu intolerance, on the other, predict a volatile future. This becomes even worse if the state security agencies too get sucked into this. There is clear evidence of the growing communalization of the police and magistracy, especially in the central Hindi-speaking states. As their faith in the police declines, the minorities begin to feel that they must be on their own to defend their religion and identity.
Such allegations have been made again and again in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, especially during widespread communal riots following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Rampant communalization of the police has prompted the Muslims to set up their own self-defence groups. Islamic reassertion in UP, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and several other states has turned into militancy and terrorism; Jehadi groups operating in Kashmir have set up their bases and safe houses in many parts of India, thus enabling them to strike deep inside the country. The foremost of these militant groups is the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), which has gained a strong foothold in Maharashtra, UP and some other states. Highly motivated SIMI cadres offer a secure and fertile base for Pakistani militant groups in some important Indian states. Set up in Aligarh (UP) on April 25, 1977, SIMI's declared mission is to infuse the spirit of Jihad in its followers in the war between Islam and Kufur, a conflict, which it believes has entered a decisive stage. What lends SIMI a special dimension and sets it apart from other fundamentalist organizations is its advocacy of arming its cadres to achieve its pan-Islamic objectives. Maintaining close links with Pakistani intelligence agencies and with highly motivated cadres of an impressionable age on its rolls, SIMI is engaged in extending the frontiers of militancy from Kashmir to the Indian heartland as also the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.¹¹

¹¹ Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in Indian, op. cit., p. 387.

Although there were scores of clashes all over the country, the Mumbai riots of 1993 were basically different in character because they saw, almost for the first time after Partition, the adoption of a strongly militant posture by the younger generation of the Muslim minority that would spawn, in course of time, movements like SIMI, Indian National League and dozens of others. It was unfortunate that as the Muslim community became increasingly suspect of the role of the police and magistracy, and seek to devise their own strategies for self defence and security. A logical outcome of such loss of faith and the crisis of confidence was the augmentation of stridency and militant sentiment in the community.\textsuperscript{12}

The Babri Masjid Ramjanambhoomi controversy is not a recent development. It dates back to the late nineteenth-century. Throughout the period that the British ruled this country, they did not allow the dispute to degenerate into the street brawls. They used the relevant provisions in the Criminal Procedure Code to freeze the status quo as far as the actual possession was concerned and left the matter regarding the legal title to be decided by courts. There, the matter rested until a couple of years after Independence, when a zealous additional district magistrate unlocked the gates and allowed the installation of some makeshift Idols in a part of the disputed structure. He also permitted a pujari to access the place for performing the necessary rituals. A Muslim organization then knocked at

\textsuperscript{12} Nandy Ashish, et. al., Creating a Nationality, op. cit., pp. 7-9.
the doors of a court of law for relief. Some time in the 1980s, Rajiv Gandhi’s government went a step further and encouraged Hindus to start visiting the temporary abode of Ram Lalla for worship. All this while, the original court case was proceeding at a slow pace, so characteristic of Indian Judicial processes. Rajiv Gandhi, who was actively wooing the Hindu community to make for the loss of electoral support among other sections, even performed a foundation laying ceremony for a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. But he was not the first, nor the last, of Congress politicians to manipulate religious symbolism for electoral gains. His mother, Indira Gandhi, had started the game in 1980, when she re-entered office after the short-lived rule of a fractious Janata Party.

“Back in office, she indulged in a recklessly cynical manipulation of religious symbolism, making public appearances in Hindu temples and espousing the cause of Hindu victimhood. Thus, while claiming that Congress was still the party that supported the Muslims and other minorities, Indira Gandhi tried to deploy the language of minority rights simultaneously with the idiom of Hindu politics.”

By the mid-1980s, “Indira Gandhi’s truce on the communal manipulation of voters had broken down, with even the Congress party, under her son, Rajiv, becoming willing to use religious affiliation as a political weapon. During the course of the decade, the number of RSS volunteers in India alone doubled to 1.8 million and a new militancy was

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exhibited by Hindu extremists as they talked of re-conquering India's lost territories of Pakistan and Bangladesh.”

The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), revitalized by a spell of political power in Delhi as a component of the Janata Party, was now set to widen its base with the inclusion of many politicians, who were Hindu nationalists at heart but did not endorse anti-Muslim or anti-Christian idiom of the Jan Sangh. The rapid rejuvenation of the Hindu right was bolstered in no small measure by the rhetoric and rath yatras of L.K. Advani and Rajiv Gandhi in handling of many of the critical concerns of religious minorities.

On all counts, it seemed that the time was now ripe for a final decisive strike in defence of the Hindu dharma. The Babri Masjid appeared to be the obvious choice from where to launch this new offensive on all symbols of real or presumed alien oppression and injustice over the centuries. For this mosque, believed by the faithful to have been built over the ruins of a Ram temple, destroyed by one of the Babar’s generals, represented a visual embodiment of what was viewed as centuries of Muslim rulers’ vicious ruthlessness. The Sangh Parivar and its political wing, the BJP, thought rightly as it turned out later, that a forceful and melodramatic strike at that major symbol of Islamic repression of Hindu religion would make a powerful impact in the densely populated Hindi-speaking states and pave the way for the political ascendancy. How valid such political calculation proved became clear towards the end of the

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century, when the BJP came to power as the dominant constituent of a coalition government. Unlike in the West, Indian politicians have always defined secularism as 'equal respect for all religions', rather than separation of church and state. This was perhaps in recognition of the multi-religious nature of Indian society. But by failing to isolate the Indian state from religious intrusions, Jawaharlal Nehru's successors in the Congress party, facilitated the communalization of the state and its various organs, including the police. Even many of Nehru's colleagues favoured a more pro-Hindu orientation of Congress policies. Sardar Patel\textsuperscript{15}, for example, praised the cultural and social role of the RSS at a tea party for some 60 fellow M.P.s in March 1950, where he described Nehru as the only true nationalist Muslim in India.\textsuperscript{16} In subsequent decades, the Congress itself became increasingly Hinduized. It would seem, therefore, that the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 could not have been a sudden development.

What happened in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992, could not have been spontaneous outburst of Hindu anger, frozen over centuries of Muslim and British rule, against the assumed desecration of a sacred site. There was a methodical build-up to the climax involving rath-yatras, provocative rhetoric, circulation of fundamentalist literature, anointing of masonry stones and bricks with sacred inscriptions (\textit{ram-shilas}), etc., over an extended period. All kinds of obscurant elements such as\textit{ sadhus}, \textit{sants} and

\begin{footnotesize}\	extsuperscript{15} \textit{Moin Shakir, Politics of Minorities Some Perspectives} (New Delhi: Ajanta Publishers), 1980, pp. 128-139.\	extsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 121-127.\end{footnotesize}
other religious Hindu groups had been permitted to set up large camps all around the disputed site by the BJP government in the state. Diverse components of the Sangh Parivar had been gearing up for Action for years. However, neither the Congress government in Delhi nor the BJP government in UP took note of the fast pace of developments and meticulous preparations by the Hindu fundamentalist lobbies for a major strike in Ayodhya. Understandably, the BJP government in UP was not very enthusiastic about protecting the monument. The inscrutable Narasimha Rao, who presided over an insecure Congress government in Delhi, remained incommunicado for most part of the day. His inaction had ensured that Delhi would be hostage to indecision in apathy to a degree that would lead perceptive observers to conclude that the Congress may not have been too averse to the destruction of the disputed structure. Indian administration, not long ago, reputed to be one of the best in the world, had by now become politicized and ineffective. Neither the magistracy nor the police functioned under a clear-cut mandate, except that they were only too well aware of the ruling party's broad objectives in respect of the mosque. Evidently, the district magistrate and police chief of Ayodhya were acting, not as public servants, expressly charged with maintenance of law and order but as individuals intent upon currying favour with their chief minister and carry out his wishes, whether articulated or not. That trend has determined Indian law-enforcement norms for over a quarter century now. Two FIRs were recorded after the incident, one at crime number 197/92 under Sections 147, 148, 149 (unlawful assembly), 153/295 (inciting and hurting religious sentiments), 427 and 395 (mischief and dacoity). The complainant was the Station House Officer of 'Ramjanambhoomi' police
station. The second FIR carried the number 198/92, although there were reports that the case was registered after the dismissal of BJP governments in three states and the arrest of L.K. Advani and other BJP leaders.\textsuperscript{17}

Some recent developments are a cause for concern in future years as can be clearly seen. The dominant strand in the BJP's framework of values is what they call 'Indianization' (read Hinduization) of all minority religions and cultures. This mindset is the product of a warped philosophy, based upon the negation of the well-known Indian traditions of pluralism, diversity, tolerance, acceptance and assimilation. Instead, it believes in imposing an entirely different definition of Indian nationhood, derived primarily from notions of a mythical but 'glorious' past. It was probably Nehru's nostalgic references to the country's glorious past that the votaries of so called cultural nationalism latched on, to advocate a return to the ancient, pre-Islamic values and beliefs and equate Indian-ness with Hindutva. In the process, they completely overlooked Nehru's basic hypothesis that it was actually diversity, not homogeneity, which had enabled Indian civilization and culture to survive for thousands of years, despite the basic divisiveness of Indian society and the fragmentation of its polity. However, one now notes with concentration, the virtual demise of Nehru's formulations in the face of rapid proliferation of the Hindu nationalist view that the minorities are enemies of the nation and riots are intended to humiliate and injure them. This highly dangerous line appears to be gaining increasing acceptance in the central and western Indian states, as the latest communal carnage in Gujarat convincingly indicates. The

\textsuperscript{17} Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in Indian, op. cit., p. 411.
Hindu view is counteracted by the Muslim hardcore, that now far outnumbers the moderates, who view communal violence as organized and pre-planned attacks meant to terrorize and depress the Muslims, to drive them out of their areas and to reduce them to second class citizens. As the diverse segments of the sangh parivar mushroom and adopt a fiercely partisan communal agenda, the Islamic hardliners too are preparing to respond in equal measure. Thus, the unfolding communal situation is imbued with distrust and suspicion between the two peoples, turning the task of maintenance of peace and order into a nightmare.

**Coimbatore 1997-1998**

The Coimbatore riots of 1997 were the first major clash between Hindus and Muslims in south India, which had remained generally free from such conflicts in the past. By the late 1980s, however, the situation in the southern states too seemed to have changed. In Kerala, the RSS had been spreading its ideology for some time that came to notice for frequent clashes with CPM cadres. In Tamil Nadu, the Hindu Munnani and some Muslim fundamentalist organizations, such as the jehad committee of Palani Baba and Umma, had gathered considerable following and often indulged in violent clashes. All this would severely vitiate the atmosphere of communal harmony that the state was traditionally known for. Grave communal violence erupted in Coimbatore in January 1997, when a Hindu Munnani leader and two BJP men were killed by suspected Muslim zealots. In the resultant violence, six persons were killed in police firing. Coimbatore district, reputed for trade and industry, had lately become a
centre for religious and sectarian tirades, generating a climate of apprehension among the people. According to police estimates, some 1,500 anti-social elements had been co-opted by extremist communal outfits to help them pursue their communal agenda.\textsuperscript{18} The state chief minister confirmed in 1997 that some sixty persons had died in communal clashes in previous ten years for which extremist elements in both communities were responsible. The rapid spread of communal violence in Tamil Nadu was linked to the murder of a Muslim hardliner, Palani Baba, known for his fiery and provocative speeches. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, a follower of Palani Baba, Imam Ali, exhibiting all the characteristics of a potential militant, joined the Al Umma, a Coimbatore-based Muslim fundamentalist organization, to prepare young Muslims to fight against the emerging threat of Hindu domination. Imam Ali along with one Hyder Ali planted a huge cache of RDX and gelatin mixture at the RSS headquarters in Chennai on 8 August 1993 that brought the massive building crashing down, killing some 10 occupants. This incident marked the beginning of a series of attacks on Hindu leaders by Islamic militants in the state. While being underground, Imam Ali founded another organization called the Islamic Defence Force which, however, did not survive for long and soon all its members joined the Al Umma. Imam Ali later traveled all the way to Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Bangladesh for training, indoctrination and motivation.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 413
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 414.
Palani Baba’s murder soon set off a chain of communal killings in different parts of the state, Coimbatore being the worst affected. As the year was coming to a close, widespread violence erupted again, taking a toll of at least 20 lives. The incident that sparked off the violence was quite trivial. A traffic constable charged two Al Umma members with traffic violations, on which they stabbed the constable and fled. This triggered a reaction from the Hindu Munnai and Hindu People’s party, who gathered in strength at the post-mortem centre, attacked a legislator belonging to the ruling party (DMK) and set his car on fire. Hindu activists also started attacking Muslims’ houses and business establishments in the locality, killing some half a dozen persons. One Muslim victim was burnt alive, underlining the intensity of communal hatred. Soon violence spread to more areas and the Muslims too responded in equal measure. Police resorted to firing in the afternoon, in which six persons lost their lives. Meanwhile, a large segment of the police too went on strike in protest against the killing of the traffic constable. Sporadic violence continued for some more days, in which 20 persons lost their lives, not a startling figure by North Indian standards but indicative of an alarming trend in South India, in a way, signaling the intensification of religious polarization of the kind that had plagued the north for centuries. Suspected Muslim extremists planted bombs in three trains originating from Chennai. On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid, nine persons died and over 70 Injured in the blasts that occurred at different railway stations. The then Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, too, was attacked while on way to address a public meeting in Coimbatore. He escaped in time but many among the audience
were killed or injured. In September 2002, Imam Ali and four others were killed in a police encounter in Bangalore city.20

**Gujarat Carnage**

The western Indian state of Gujarat, fondly hailed as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, acknowledged as one among the greatest human beings of all times, witnessed the most deadly carnage in India in early 2002. A train was attacked in Godhra, by Muslims, in which a large number of Hindus lost their lives. The Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, an RSS ideologue, termed the incident as 'preplanned, violent act of terrorism', which the government viewed 'very seriously'. The retaliatory violence erupted in Ahmedabad and other places the next day. The way the police handled the orgy of killings, lootings, rape and other atrocious acts by mobs, reportedly led by ruling party leaders and legislators, confirmed the worst fears of civil society groups that the police was once again proving more loyal to their political masters than the law of the land, which they were mandated to uphold.21

The Gujarat Carnage, some call it genocide, has been well-documented, thanks to alert media and the dedication and diligence with which citizen groups and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) worked to expose administrative atrophy and collusion of the law-enforcement organization with a partisan political leadership. Their ingenuity and

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20 Ibid., p. 415.
contribution in this regard are undoubtedly deeds of great courage and of immense value. In a sense, it is also a tribute to the strength and vibrancy of the secular tradition, that thankfully, still runs deep in Indian society as a whole, not excluding a vast majority of Hindus, although secular value-systems are clearly on the wane, especially in the central and western states, after the rise to power of the Hindutva adherents. More seriously, anti-minority biases are no longer confined to the uninformed segments of the people, they now seriously afflict even the educated and affluent classes. Considering all these factors, it is highly creditable that the Indian civil society still retains enough fire and sparkle to be able to rouse the collective conscience of the nation, so as to effectively challenge the forces of obscurantism, intolerance, atavism and communal hatred that triggered the recent Gujarat happenings.22

The holocaust in Gujarat also presented a somewhat newer phenomenon of large parts of rural areas getting seriously affected by the communal poison, hitherto an essentially urban occurrence. For a long time, communal riots were assumed to grow out of the feelings of anomie and rootlessness inherent in urban situation. However, Gujarat showed that rural areas were also not immune from the poison, where dalits and tribal populations were being increasingly sucked into communalism. Riots now appear to be less about economic gains as both the rioters and the victims belong to poor classes. Migration and social change probably created a vacuum where the VHP and other privar outfits stepped in. In a way, the newfound Hindutva link of the dalit communities, acquired over a period,

22 Ibid., pp. 388-389.
gave them a feeling of belonging to a wider trans-local environment and a new status, which they found appealing. There were probably other factors that galvanized the Gujarat countryside so effectively in pursuing the virulent communal agenda of the Hindutva warriors, which needs to be explored by social scientists and criminologists. However, it is clear that riots of this magnitude cannot take place without meticulous planning and connivance on the part of the government and the party in power. That is what makes the Gujarat carnage of 2002 stand out as unique and, at the same time, the most dangerous development. Political leaders and their civil service cohorts also seem to be indifferent to the growing trend towards ghettoization that follows every communal riot between the Hindus and Muslims, at least during the last few decades. Both these communities seek to relocate in areas where their co-religionists form a majority. This gives them a sense of safety, security and confidence. While the Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad and other cities in Gujarat have mostly been living in segregated localities, Muslim areas frequently are being referred to as 'little Pakistans'; the trend is also being noticed in other cities across the country.\footnote{Ibid.}

The ugly scars of the 1992 communal riots in Bhopal, for example, have slowly been re-arranging habitations in the city on communal lines. Ghettos seem to be consolidating as communities. Muslims and Hindus migrate to areas or localities which are inhabited by their respective communities. A city that always took pride in its composite culture wears a decidedly divided look a decade after the post-Ayodhya riots. Those
dealing in real estate claim that a substantial number of Muslim families, a large percentage of them being government servants, have migrated to old Bhopal in the last decade, while even more Hindu families have shifted to new Bhopal. According to rough estimates, some twenty thousand families belonging to the two communities have shifted to the areas of their respective majority in the last ten years, which points to the uncomfortable conclusion that almost a hundred and fifty thousand people have sought relocation to what they consider safer areas, thus seriously changing the demography of the city with a total population of one and a half million. Such large scale segregation of already estranged communities will only further minimize any interaction between them and lead to dangerously high levels of alienation, distrust and hostility. That kind of development can only spell further polarization between the two communities and a massive backlash in terms of sectarian conflicts, loss of lives and disruption of economic activity, apart from sowing seeds of Muslim terrorism within the country itself, a most hazardous prospect indeed. An organization, calling itself the Gujarat Muslim Revenge Force, has already come to notice for planting bombs in several places in Mumbai in late 2003, resulting in heavy loss of life, property and business. Such home-grown terrorism is likely to multiply in the future.

**Conversion and Christianity**

Anti-Christian sentiment has been growing in the Hindi-speaking states since Independence because of their indulgence in conversion by
fraud and deceit. The conversion from Hinduism to Christianity has been on a very large scale. Taking advantage of the broadmindedness of the Hindus, the Christian Missionaries had been indulging in this since long. This was reported by the Hindus in general and some political outfits in particular. The central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh was the first to impose a series of restrictions to discourage conversions. The Hindutva parties viewed conversions to Christianity and Islam unpatriotic and anti-national and launched a concerted campaign against conversions and the missionaries. However, it was not until the BJP-led coalition occupied office in New Delhi and some Indian states towards the end of the twentieth century that Christian-bashing assumed alarming proportions. In sporadic incidents in UP, MP and some other states, priests and nuns were assaulted, churches were burnt or looted and many Christian institutions vandalized. Nearly 400 such incidents were reported during the four-year period between 1997 and 2001. The attacks assumed almost epidemic dimensions during mid-2000, when a number of Christian institutions were attacked.

According to one estimate, while the total number of cases involving violence against Christians between 1964 and 1996, a period of 32 years, was only 38, this number had touched a high of 136 in just one year in 1998. The upward trend in such incidents continued in the succeeding years, the states most affected being UP and Gujarat, both ruled by the BJP. According to figures furnished to the National Minorities Commission by state police departments, while five persons died in attacks on Christian

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institutions in 1997 and 1998, the number of fatalities rose to 12 in 1999 and 13 in 2000. The number of those injured rose from 45 in 1998 to 91 in 1998 and 132 in 2000. Between January 1999 and March 2001, the number of attacks on Christians varied from 40 in Orissa to 60 in Gujarat, 54 in Tamil Nadu, 49 in Kerala, 33 in UP and 19 in Andhra Pradesh. While some of these incidents were minor in nature, others like disruption of prayer meetings and gospel readings, damage to Bibles, holy crosses, statues and church buildings created considerable panic and apprehensions in the minority community.  

Left Extremism (Naxalism)

One of the most dangerous fallouts of accentuated levels of social tensions was the rise and rapid intensification of left extremism in several backward regions of the country, but principally in Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Bihar, followed by Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Maharashtra. Bihar and MP were bifurcated in November 2000 to carve out two new states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, respectively. For historical, sociological and economic reasons, left extremist groups struck deep roots in the tribal areas in thickly forested hilly terrains, where the territories of MP, AP and Maharashtra meet along shared borders. While these factors provide enormous tactical and logistical advantage to the extremists, in operational terms, they are equally unhelpful to the security forces. The simple, credulous tribal people, living in isolated hamlets, largely untouched by modern lifestyles, have been subjected to exploitation by unscrupulous  

25 Ibid.
outsiders in many ways. Politicians ever ready to manipulate collective discontent and disaffection to further their own political interests, found the region a fertile ground for their own characteristic form of exploitation. Far from minimizing the economic and social manipulation of these primal people, the new ruling classes only made the situation worse by joining in such exploitative processes. New social justice laws and constitutional provisions promising equal opportunities to all Indians, regardless of their station in life, could not break the stranglehold of the exploiting classes on the economic and social life of the tribal people. This provided a ready and fertile ground for left extremist groups, who had broken away from the mainstream communist movement in the 1960s.26

A violent peasant movement, led by the Communist Party of India, which had engulfed the Telengana region in A.P soon after Independence, took the form of an intense class struggle and insurgency. A somewhat similar development took place in some former princely states of the Panjab, both areas forming part of princely India (Hyderabad of the Nizams and PEPSU), where the administration was apparently more repressive than in British India. These incipient insurgencies were ruthlessly suppressed by the police and district officers, obviously with the tacit approval of the state governments. The tendency of the Indian police to act unlawfully in difficult situations has been a part of the Indian law-enforcement culture for centuries. It was this very culture, which came so prominently into play in the suppression of Sikh militancy in the Panjab in the early 1990s, and in Kashmir later. Notably, while police officials may be indicted for such

26 Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in India, op. cit., p. 433.
lawless practices, the political executives, who encourage such misconduct, almost always escape unscathed. After the eradication of extremist social violence in PEPSU, the area witnessed growing prosperity and enrichment of village communities through focused planning and development processes; there was thus no recurrence of the earlier social unrest. Telengana in A.P. was, however, not so lucky. Insurgent movements, therefore, resurfaced with added vigour after a brief interval and have remained largely uncontrolled since then. Left extremism, in fact, poses a major challenge to the Indian state in an increasingly insecure environment in AP, Bihar, MP and Chhattisgarh.

The extreme left broke away from the CPM in 1968, after the many incidents of violence committed by its cadres against landlords, police officials, revenue officials, etc., the so-called class enemies in the Marxist Jargon, in Naxalbari village in North Bengal in May 1967. In June 1968, an All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) was set up with representatives of different revolutionary groups in various states. Subsequently, AICCCR was dissolved and a new party under the name of Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) or CPI (ML) was formed in April 1969, under the chairmanship of the charismatic Charu Majumdar. The new party, which derived its basic inspiration from the Chinese communist party and considered Soviet communists as revisionists, soon grew vastly in popularity, movement built around left extremism came to be called Naxalism, after the name of the
village. The term, if not the underlying philosophy, became enormously popular and would be more, in future. Some movements aimed at changing the existing invidious socio-politico order, by resort to extra-constitutional means, in the belief that all legal and constitutional modes of addressing social injustice were futile and had invariably proved ineffective. The movement (or, at least, the philosophy) that took birth in Naxalbarai in 1967 was basically inspired by the Maoist wave in China.

The CPI (ML) continued to maintain close fraternal contacts with the Chinese party and freely advocated resort to extremist violence as a preferred mode of securing political power. This doctrine would henceforth occupy the extreme left space in the Indian political spectrum and deeply influence many political movements in West Bengal, Bihar, Panjab, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, MP and Maharashtra. The large tribal territories situated at the junction of AP, MP and Maharashtra and South Bihar (now Jharkhand) would continue to be in the grip of Naxalite creeds for several years to come, spawning an unending stream of savage violence, with the police proving grossly ineffective in checking their growing influence. Naxalism, which had fired the imagination of many a student group from well-known Delhi colleges and universities in its initial years, as well as large sections of the intelligentsia in metropolitan areas, later got divided and subdivided into many factions. At the end of 1987, for instance, there were at least 35 identifiable left wing parties or

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groups, with a combined strength of over 42,000, though only seven of them could boast of a membership of more than 100; 96 per cent were concentrated in about half a dozen states. By mid-1990s, several districts of central Bihar were severely affected by violence and lawlessness let loose by two extremist groups, Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and CPI(ML) Party Unity, fighting each other for area domination. Several private caste-based militias (senas), operating in roughly the same area, made the confusion worse, with the police remaining a helpless and a largely ineffective spectator. It is as if the state had ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{29}

Naxalite cadres routinely indulge in large-scale attacks on police officials, police posts and land-owning classes in a bid to annihilate class enemies, though the dissidents within the Marxist stream are their special targets. The movement was ruthlessly suppressed by the CPM government in West Bengal in 1967. Repressive measures in AP also had some effect, though Naxalism as a creed continued to seriously colour the activities of leftist groups in AP and its neighbouring states. CPI (ML) later split into many small groups, most of them having only limited areas of influence, in pockets of different states. Only seven of them, i.e. Communist Organization of India (Marxist-Leninist), CPI(ML) Anti-Lin Biao, Provisional Central Committee, CPI(ML) (Bhaiji), CP(ML)-Party Unity, Centre of Communist Revolutionaries of India (ML) and the Central Revolutionary Committee had a membership of 1,000 or more. The largest groups operated only in A.P, Bihar and the Panjab. Later CPI(ML), Peoples War Group (PWG), CPI(ML). Anti-Lin Biao, CPI(ML)-Party Unity and

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 364.
Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) emerged as far more violent and motivated than others and these groups alone were responsible for 279, 60, 45 and 33 violent incidents, respectively, during 1987. The sphere of their activity remained confined mainly to the rural areas of Telangana, Bihar and east UP, three of the most backward regions in the country. There were in all 515 left-extremist inspired incidents in 1987 as against 406 in 1986. AP and Bihar alone accounted for 96 per cent of these incidents. 24 policemen and 75 others lost their lives in AP and 113 in Bihar. PWG alone was responsible for 225 incidents. Fifty encounters took place between Police and Naxalites in which 29 extremists lost their lives. Attempts made in 1988 to bring about a merger of MCC and PWG across the borders of four states - AP, MP, Bihar and Orissa - to create a 'guerrilla zone' in the mainly forested areas, however, did not succeed, though violent activities of the Naxalite groups continued to escalate during the subsequent years.30 AP and Bihar, were the most affected, with the PWG in AP and MCC in Bihar being most active. Later, some half a dozen districts in Chhattisgarh, too became severely affected by Naxalite activities, committed by PWG cadres linked to those operating in AP and Maharashtra. A series of casualties among police and political persons in ambushes and landmines, including the murder of an MP Minister in 1999, caused widespread demoralization in the area. AP continues to be the worst affected state with Naxalite elements virtually engaged in an insurgency type of class warfare. In Bihar, some Naxalite outfits have acquired considerable influence in electoral politics, either through direct participation or by lending

30 Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in India, op. cit., p. 435.
clandestine support to candidates likely to help them. They have also been 
abruptly exploiting the numerous caste-based schisms in rural Bihar by 
aligning with or opposing the many private armed senas in north Bihar.

The left extremist groups continue to be active in A.P and Bihar 
indulging in violent acts of all types but mainly murders and kidnappings of 
their target groups, dacoities and robberies. They also engage in social and 
economic uplift of tribal communities in the areas of their operation and 
generally try to win them over more for selfish ends than extending help. 
Police is unable to act in a coordinated manner: it lacks adequate 
manpower, transport, communication facilities and sophisticated weaponry. 
They are, of course, no match in commitment and motivation to the highly 
dedicated Naxalite cadres. Although some improvement is lately noticeable 
in AP, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, Bihar continues to present a 
dismal picture due to police demoralization, inept and deeply compromised 
political leadership and a fragmented social structure. Almost all politicians 
are known to seek help from such groups during elections and not only in 
Bihar but elsewhere too. It might be of interest to note that many fugitive 
Naxalite cadres in the Panjab sought refuge among Sikh militant groups in 
the 1980s. Further, though communism as an ideology is on its last legs 
internationally, its Indian avatar is still full of vigour in at least three Indian 
states. Left extremism where ideology is the main driving force will, 
therefore, continue to exercise considerable influence in backward and 
derunderdeveloped areas, in which social and economic disparities have got 
accentuated after Independence. Increasing contacts between Naxalite 
groups and the militant outfits in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir as also with
LTTE of Sri Lanka, have added another sinister dimension to the phenomenon of left extremism in India. According to recent reports, Nepalese Maoist insurgents are also trying to secure a foothold in the neighbouring Indian states, in order to finally link up with the Naxalite groups, operating in Bihar and its adjacent states and create a revolutionary corridor. If such plans succeed, the security situation in this country would indeed be in serious jeopardy.31

Some new features of left extremism are the increased use of improvised explosive devices, close collaboration between MCC in Bihar and JWG in AP in sharing expertise on the use of explosives and remote-controlled weapons, calculated attempts of certain Naxalite groups to mobilize the Muslim community by exploiting their sense of insecurity, following the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and a sustained plan of expansion of the activities of the All India Students Association, an affiliate of the CPI(ML), to reach the student community in Bihar, UP and Delhi. The CPI(ML)-Vinod Mishra group continues to evince interest in the ethnic, regional and environmental movements in several parts of the country. Naxalite groups have also learnt to display considerable maturity, pragmatism and innovativeness of approach, with a view to exploiting all populist issues surfacing from time to time, apart from the usual problems of economic deprivation. Thus, atrocities on dalits, remunerative prices for agriculture and forest produce and caste and communal issues have been brought on their agenda at different times and places to influence students.

youth, farmers, tribal communities, depressed and minority sections. Increasingly confrontationist postures are being adopted against the security forces, informants ruthlessly dealt with and kidnappings of politicians and officials resorted to, in order to secure the release of fellow cadres. In 1993, there were 1,279 violent incidents resulting in 470 casualties (including 64 police/SF personnel) involving the left extremist groups all over India. 268 violent incidents with 69 deaths (no SF/police) were reported up to March 31, 1994.\(^{32}\)

Left extremist violence, which registered a statistical decline in 1998 and 1999 showed an upward trend again during the year 2000. The number of incidents, which had reached around 1,500, declined in 1998 to around 1,350 and to around 1,250 in 1999. However, an upward trend was again noticed in the subsequent year (around 650 incidents) up to June 1999. The number of casualties, which had declined in 1998 to around 500, registered an increase in 1999 (around 600 deaths). In 2000 (up to 30 June), around 300 killings took place. Left extremist movements, marked by grave incidents of violence, remain a pronounced feature of the law and order scenario in Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand, followed by Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Orissa. There is, however, no noticeably uniform pattern of escalation of the activities of the leftist groups mentioned above. It could be due to one of the two causes: either many such groups are losing their hold in the areas of their earlier influence or, in keeping with the classic pattern of militant operations, the weaker groups are being ousted by the

 Assam is no longer openly voiced, other demands of political and economic nature, which centre around safeguarding the interests of the Assamese people in the various fields, are very much on their agenda. While in office, the AASU proved to be a disaster and could provide but an inept administration with severe faction fights among the top leadership making them a butt of many a drawing room joke. They could not come up to the expectations of the people and also failed to provide an efficient government, they also failed to achieve their avowed objectives. The extent of immigration into Assam did not materially diminish nor did the number of earlier illegal settlers identified for deportation amount to very much. The whole affair was actually reduced to a slanging match between the centre and Assam over the efficacy of the relevant legislation. With the Congress returning to power, the process of identification and deportation of unwanted aliens ceased altogether. This gave ULFA enough reason to go back on the Accord that they had earlier signed with the central government.\textsuperscript{35}

ULFA, thereafter, not only stepped up its own activities - extortions, kidnappings, murders, and explosions - but also actively sought to coordinate the violent acts of other terrorist groups in the region, by organizing combined operations and training camps in collaboration with Bodo Security Force, ULVA, NSCN and other groups. Contacts were also established with the LTTE in distant Sri Lanka and Sikh militants and some Kashmiri groups in north-west India. ULFA indulged in 149 incidents resulting in 50 deaths after April 92 when the talks with the Indian

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 103.
authorities broke down. They also resorted to various forms of social activism like operating model farms, distributing textbooks, discouraging liquor trade and drinking in rural areas, to strengthen their mass base. This was also sought to be achieved by adopting a pro-immigrant stance and admitting some Muslims in their ranks. Altogether 251 violent incidents involving ULFA and Bodos resulting in 133 (SF 19) casualties during 1993 as against 211 violent indigenous Assamese groups and the emergence of new political incidents and 168 casualties (SF 50) in 1992 took place. Sixty Six violent incidents with 47 casualties (SF-Police 9) were reported until 31 March 1994. Inadequate strategic and logistical resources, lack of community support and weak political leadership badly affected the capacity of security forces to contain the growing militancy.

Bodos, a major plains tribal group in lower Assam, wanted a separate state to safeguard their distinctive identity and way of life. Such a demand being unacceptable, a degree of autonomy was offered, which failed to satisfy the Bodo militants, who then took to extremism. 57 incidents of Bodo violence took place in the later half of 1992, resulting in 95 deaths as against 28 incidents and 25 deaths in the earlier half. ABSU agreed to the establishment of an Autonomous Bodo Council in February 1993. This did not, however, bring peace to the area as the Bd.SF36 disowned the accord and continued to indulge in targeted killings, kidappings and extortions, especially of tea estate personnel, non-tribal business-persons, police and security forces and attacks against central public undertakings, trains and public transport. In addition to the

36 Ibid., p. 194
traditional safe houses in the neighbouring countries, they also used Bhutan's inaccessible terrain for shelter. By far the most gruesome incident had taken place earlier in 1983 near village Nelli in Assam, in which violence on a massive scale was perpetrated by Bodo extremists upon scores of immigrant Muslims, who were mercilessly done to death. In a retaliatory move, security forces torched several Bodo settlements and indulged in other unlawful practices to teach the Bodos a lesson. As was to be expected, such vindictive action would lead to far higher levels of militancy than before. Extremist elements continued to attack security forces, Assamese and other non-Bodo groups and central government property, especially railway bridges and trains, taking a heavy toll of life and property.

The violence by ULFA declined in 1999 after a spurt in 1998. The first six months period of the year 2000, however, witnessed an alarming increase in casualties, including police and security forces personnel. Since 1997, the annual figures of violence by ULFA have been in the range of 200 to 300, accounting for killings ranging between 100 and 150. The districts of Nalbari, Tinsukia, Nagaon, Barpeta, Dibrugarh, Kamrup, Dhubri, Bongai gaon and Sibsagar remain the worst affected. Bodo militancy also touched a new high in 1998. The Bodo militants were responsible for approximately 200 incidents of violence, resulting in around 200 killings in 1997, which showed an alarming jump in 1998 (approximately 450 incidents with some 500 killings), a development which could be attributed to ethnic cleansing pursued by the NDFB, against
The magnitude of violence, however, considerably decreased in 1999 (below 200 violent incidents) with trend-being maintained in the first six months of 2000. The calculated attempts at ethnic cleansing by Bodo militants led to the death of some 200 non-Bodos, majority of them Santhals, during 1998, as against a lower figure in 1997. Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts bore the brunt of NDFB violence. On the other hand, the level of violence indulged in by the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLI), came down substantially during 1999 and 2000, due mainly to the suspension of its operations since July 1999 and initiation of talks with the central and state governments. The violence by the NSCN(I) and its partner Dima Halam Deogah showed a spurt in 2000, after remaining at the same level of around 30 incidents during the previous two years (1998 and 1999). In the year 2000 (until 30 June) there were 20 incidents, involving some 15 killings. Emergence (21 May 1999) of a new Karbi militant outfit, United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), an umbrella body of Karbi National Volunteers (KN-V) and Karbi People's Front (KPF), demanding a separate Karbi state, has added a new dimension to the militancy situation in the state. The outfit mostly targeting non-Karbis, whom they want to be driven out of the area, was responsible for about five incidents involving a couple of killings in 1999 and about 15 incidents (around 30 killings) in the year 2000. The overall level of militant violence in Assam has shown a decline after 1998. The number of security forces casualties has, however, gone up in 1999 largely due to meticulously planned attacks by the

37 Ibid., pp. 142-144.
militants for whom the police, security forces, informers and non-cooperative business persons have been the main targets.\textsuperscript{38}

Nagaland

Unrest in Nagaland is attributed to historical reasons. The area was never fully administered by the British Indian administrations and the tribal people of the region were mostly left to themselves. The government would intervene only if they presented a threat to the neighbouring settled areas of serious outbreaks of inter-tribal killings. So, when the government of independent India sought to extend the new legal and constitutional framework in the area, the tribal communities were not too enthusiastic, as they felt, not without reason, that their traditional mode of life was under threat. Never too fond of the plains people, inhabiting the neighbouring districts of Assam, who had been exploiting the simple and unsuspecting tribes people for centuries, the Nagas now firmly rejected any advances from the new Indian establishment. Apprehensive of the moves and designs of the new government, they took to violence and subversion in right earnest soon after independence. As more and more tribes got sucked into unrest and disorder, the entire Naga Hills district of Assam, later to be formed into a separate state of Nagaland, was seething with discontent and militant protest. There were allegations at the time that some foreign elements, including Christian missionaries, were actively involved in stirring up the tribes. However, when considered against the backdrop of the historical experience of the tribal people and their isolated existence in

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., pp. 154-172.
their exclusive habitat, the kind of developments would appear to be quite logical and natural. Also, since tribal people of the same ethnic stock lived across the border in Myanmar and parts of Manipur, these linkages were soon activated and logistical and other support from the former was available in plenty. In the years following Indian Independence, the situation rapidly deteriorated leading to the deployment of sizeable numbers of armed forces in the area. A judicious mix of repression and negotiations led to some improvement in the situation in course of time. Nagaland was constituted as a separate state of the union. Massive allotment of funds was also made, ostensibly for the speedy development of the region. This was a situation tailor-made for winning over the local leadership to a peaceful solution of the problem, as they had now secured access both to political power and vast amounts of development funds. It did not take long for the powerful Naga chieftains to be sucked into this new game of making easy money. The policy of corrupting local politicians and chieftains, it may be added in passing, is not a post-independence phenomenon. It was first thought of by Lord Curzon, who used it to telling effect in NWFP.39

In course of time, extremist activities declined and a modicum of peace was restored, though occasional resurgence continued to occur, especially by the more influential faction of the NSCN, known as NSCN(I-M) after its leaders Isaac Swu and T. Muivah. The other faction came to be known as NSCN(K) after its leader Khaplang, actually a

Burmese Naga. The government of India had declared a unilateral cease-fire in 1997, which still remains in force (2003), though it has not deterred the NSCN(I-M) from indulging in terrorist attacks on security forces and vulnerable sections from time to time. A steady supply of sophisticated weapons from Thailand via Bangladesh seems to have further strengthened the NSCNJ-M). These groups also frequently augment their arsenal by snatchings from security forces. Together with ULFA of Assam, NSCN(I-M) is also actively engaged in expanding its role in the north-east by coordinating and supporting the training and logistical facilities of other militant groups. Pakistan's ISI has lately emerged as the most active foreign subversive outfit, having established a sizeable presence in the north-east and in the neighbouring kingdom of Nepal. The end of the year 1999 was marked by a well-planned attack on the chief minister of Nagaland, when he narrowly escaped an ambush by militant Naga groups, while on his way to Kohima, though a few security personnel lost their lives. Acquisition of sophisticated arms from foreign markets by the NSCN(I-M), intense inter-group rivalry between the NSCN(I-M) and the NSCN(K) and extensive extortion and looting operations by the militant groups, remains the main feature of the insurgency scene. Major attacks by the NSCN(I-M) on police and security forces seem to have abated since the declaration of the ceasefire in August 1997, though other violent activities, such as extortion, abduction and attacks on civilians continue. On 13 September 2000, the police were again targeted when ULFA attacked and killed ten police officers (October of the same year), Assamese petty traders, living
and pursuing their vocations for decades in remote villages in upper Assam, were attacked killing over two dozen persons in repeated incidents.40

The so-called Naga peace process that was to follow the ceasefire in 1997 has not made much progress. The union government's interlocutor for talks with the Isaac Swu-Muivah faction of the NSCN, K. Padmanabhaiah, a former union home secretary, has often been found wanting in taking a firm stand on some controversial issues. This causes confusion both in the public and the Naga underground. Two specific issues that need priority attention pertain to the Naga demand for a greater Nagaland or Nagalim and the refusal of NSCN(I-M) to be treated as Indian citizens. Neither Padmanabhaiah nor the union government has tried to set the record straight on these crucial issues, which naturally causes divergent perceptions between the two negotiating teams. So far, both Swu and Muivah have maintained the fiction that they are not Indian citizens and therefore all their meetings with the Indian side must take place outside the country.41 The question of greater Nagaland is even more complex, as it involves another equally formidable and determined party, i.e. the Meltel people of Manipur. Any proposal to include the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur in a greater Nagaland promptly leads to extensive rioting and killings there. This happened in the summer of 2001, when the Indian government agreed to consider the extension of the Naga ceasefire to the entire north-east. Even after the government backed out, it took many months for the situation to come back to normal. Another important actor in

40 Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in India, op. cit., pp. 451-452.
41 Ibid.
the region is the Naga Ho-Ho or the council of elders, who voice the collective desire of common Nagas for restoration of peace and order and quickening of development processes of the area.

**Mizoram and Tripura**

The genesis and growth of militancy in Mizoram (earlier the Mizo Hills district of Assam) was somewhat similar to that in Nagaland, except that the Mizos were more advanced and enjoyed higher living standards. Peace was ushered in the area by the maintenance of a discreet balance between persistent armed pressure against the insurgents and negotiations with the underground leadership. Mizoram was carved out of Assam as a separate state, thus providing free access to power and plenty of funds to the new political authorities. Laldenga, the supreme leader of the Mizos, who had led the Mizo insurgency for over a decade, entered into an agreement with the government to give up violence and participate in the political process. Ever since then, the state has had regular elections and is the most peaceful of all the north-eastern states. In fact, Mizoram can be taken as a model for finding workable solutions to other similarly disturbed areas in the country.

Tripura, a tribal majority state until independence, started losing its tribal character with the influx of Hindu Bengalis from East Pakistan after Partition. The tribal people of the state have been nursing this grouse ever since and have taken to violence and terrorism to secure some slices of the political cake. The tribal resentment has been exploited by the two principal political outfits with their own ends. The ATTF and NUT were involved in
155 violent incidents with 75 casualties (SF 13) during 1993 as against 133 violent incidents with 87 casualties (SF 18) in 1992. Nine incidents with 8 deaths (no SF casualty) were reported until 31 March 1994. The incidents involved selective abductions, killings, assaults and extortions, mainly to procure arms and ammunition. In more recent times, ATTF has vastly extended its span of activities by attacking security posts, police stations, non tribal population and kidnapping of VIPs. Violence by tribal militants, including the ATTF and the NUT and other lawless elements, has been showing an upward trend. As against around 300 incidents of violence, resulting in about the same number of deaths in 1997, there was a sharp increase of about 100 per cent in the violent incidents in 1998, though the number of casualties remained at the same level. The year 1999 also registered an increase in the number of violent incidents with a marginal increase in the number of casualties. The year 2000 witnessed around 450 incidents with 200 killings by the middle of the year. Extremist violence remained mainly targeted against non-tribal population and included ambush, robbery, extortion, abduction for ransom and attacks on vehicles. Fortunately there is comparatively more peace during the last two, three years.

In Meghalaya, the violent activities of the Hynniew-trep National Liberation Council (HNLC) have shown a significant increase in recent years. While it was involved in around 10 incidents of violence in 1997, the magnitude of violence showed a steep increase in 1999 (some 25 incidents). The year 2000 (up to 30 June) witnessed around 20 incidents. The violence by the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) also registered a steady
rise from 15 incidents in 1998 to 25 incidents in 1999 and 15 incidents in the first six months of 2000. A third militant outfit, viz., the People's Liberation Front of Meghalaya (PLFM) has also been indulging in violent activities such as attacks on police beat houses, looting, arson and extortion from non-tribal businessmen in the districts of East, West and South Garo Hills. Here too the main targets of attack are outsiders like Gurkhas, Bengalis and plains people.  

**Meitei Extremism (Manipur)**

The remote and extremely inaccessible state of Manipur on the borders of Myanmar and Bangladesh has remained cut-off from the Indian mainstream, in more senses than one. Its integration with the political and cultural matrix of the country has posed numerous problems of an intractable nature. Even now, it continues to live in somewhat troubled relationship with mainstream Indian politics. The situation in Manipur has been rendered very complex indeed because of the unusual amalgam of numerous diverse communities inhabiting the state. The indigenous Meitei people, claiming to be the oldest inhabitants of the state, are exceedingly intolerant of other settlers such as the Nagas, Kukis and the more recent Bengali infiltrators from Bangladesh. All these various groups seek to advance their own respective agenda with the help of underground organizations, which regularly indulge in violent activities. The PLA, for one, was found responsible for 148 incidents (58 deaths) in 1992 as against 42 incidents in 1998 and 25 incidents in 1999.

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103 incidents (40 deaths) in 1991. Their attacks on security forces almost doubled in 1992 as compared to 1991; it also resorted to extensive extortions. Other groups like PREPAK and KCP also showed signs of stepped up violence. They also undertook recruitment drives in the areas of their influence and organized (or took part in) coordination meetings of all major underground groups in the north-east in a neighbouring country. New groups like United Islamic Revolutionary Army and Kuki National Army came into being to safeguard their particular sectional interests. The insurgency situation in Manipur took a turn for the worse in 1993 and became more complicated with clashes between the Kuki and Naga tribesmen in the southern districts. The NSCN(I-M) and the Kuki National Army (KNA) also stepped up their activities in and around the commercially important border town of Moreh - thus highlighting the smuggling terrorist groups. In 1993, there were 416 violent incidents with 286 killings (SF 87) as against 240 violent incidents with 100 causalities (SF 30) in 1992. Sixty violent incidents, resulting in 27 causalities (SF 4) were reported until 31 March 1994.

A deeply disturbing development in 1993-4 was the eruption of a full-fledged -inter-tribal warfare between the Naga and Kuki tribes that took a heavy toll of life. There were 192 violent incidents between the Nagas and Kukis, with 305 (Kukis 245, Nagas 60) casualties and injuries to 75 others, triggering a mass exodus of people from the rural areas, apprehending attacks from rival groups. Nearly 25,000 persons took shelter in relief camps. Some form of ethnic cleansing was obviously underway to buttress the Naga demand of redrawing the state boundaries in fulfilment of
the demand for formation of greater Nagaland. However, the figures were high during the three years beginning 1997. As against a total of around 700 incidents in 1997, there was a sharp drop of about 50 per cent in 1998 and further by 30 per cent in the following year. Similarly, the intensity of the Naga-Kuki strife has come down sharply during the year 2000, following the signing of a peace accord between representative bodies of the two tribes (12 October 1998), though an undercurrent of ethnic mistrust persists in Churachandpur district. Meltel violence, however, remained high in 1999 and 2000. The violence by almost all the groups comprised of killings, extortions, abductions, ambushes, lootings, arson and attack on the SF, government officials and suspected informers. The relations between the Meitei militants and Nagas deteriorated once again, when the government of India appeared to succumb to the pressure exercised by NSCN(I-M) on the Padmanabhaiah mission for extension of the ceasefire to the entire north-east region. The resultant violence took a heavy toll of life and property in Manipur and neighbouring areas.43 The political class in Manipur became a special target of mass anger and violence. Manipur is again gripped in the spurt of violence and needs urgent attention.

Kerala

Kerala was another state known for its communal harmony although three important communities - Hindus, Muslims and Christians lived there for centuries. This state is also culturally and linguistically very well integrated and hence, according to our hypothesis, inter-communal tensions

43 Ibid.
were far less, if not totally absent. However, the socio-economic situation is fast changing and new political developments and changing political alliances have introduced a strong element of communalism in Kerala politics. The Muslim League joined the alliances (which was formed by the then Congress party to dethrone the communists in 1956) on certain terms and conditions. More such alliances came into existence and the alliance partners competed with each other in conceding demands put forward by various communal groups. The Nairs, not to be outdone by others, encouraged the RSS to strengthen its base in Kerala. And soon with the advent of the RSS, communal virus began to spread very fast in that state. Communal riots were unknown earlier in Kerala but with the Tellichery riots in 1970 (in which the involvement of RSS was established by the commission of inquiry) Kerala also now has the dubious distinction of having its place on the map of communally sensitive states in India.\footnote{Bose, Pradeep, Communism and Communist System: Some Reflections, op. cit., p. 369.} After Hindu Muslim riots, Hindu-Christian tensions also arose on the question of a cross found at Nilikkam. In fact, the Kerala Congress which is dominated by the Christians and which too, like the Muslim League, makes alliances with one or the other ruling parties, causes inter-communal problems. However, comparatively speaking, Hindu-Christian problem is not as acute as Hindu-Muslim problem as the latter has an all India character. However, despite all this, communal problem is peripheral in Kerala and Kerala remains communally more balanced than any other state.
Punjab Imbroglio

The Punjabis are the most assimilated cultural lot. The Sikhs and Hindus often intermarried and the cases of one of the sons of a Punjabi Hindu family converting to Sikhism are also not rare. There had never been historical animosity between the Sikhs and Hindus either. At the time of partition also, the Sikhs and Hindus stood united. Despite all this history of harmony and coexistence, a sharp communal conflict has developed between the Hindus and the Sikhs. What went wrong? Why this sudden eruption of communal conflict?

Some Sikhs are asserting their separate identity today as they feel aggrieved in a number of ways. The Akalis and Sikh extremists are fighting not for the religious demands only. These demands have been accepted by the Central government anyway. The real question pertains to economic demands. Adequate share in river waters, hydro-electric power, control over Chandigarh, and continued possession of Abohar and Fazilka areas are some of the important demands put forward by the Akalis. The Akalis, in other words, represent the aspirations of Sikh bourgeoisie in Punjab which has come in direct conflict with the Punjabi Hindu bourgeoisie. The Akalis and Sikh extremists, by putting forward religious demands, were trying to mobilise the Sikh masses. Here again is the question of reassertion of Sikh fundamentalism to realise secular aspirations of the dominant classes among the Sikhs. The assertion of religious and communal identity was made by those Sikhs who were more prosperous and lived mostly in the rural areas. The new-found prosperity of the Jat Sikhs led to breaking of
traditional moral bounds and also has increased their secular aspirations for the ever-expanding share in economic development. The increasing alienation of Jat Sikhs from traditional religion alarmed the Akalis whose hold over them was loosening. Hence they were trying to ‘stem the rot’ by militant assertion of their communal identity on the one hand, and by putting forward economic demands representing the aspirations of the Sikh Kulaks and bourgeoisie, on the other. The Anandpur Sahib resolution demanding complete autonomy for the State of Punjab should also be viewed in this perspective.  

This militant assertion of religious identity, while increasing the Akali hold over the Jat Sikh peasantry, brought the Sikhs themselves in sharp conflict with the Punjabi Hindus and hence communal imbroglio developed in Punjab. It is also interesting to note that nearly all the militants were young, some of them students, others who had just finished their studies and were looking for jobs. They joined militant movement more probably because they were frustrated owing to non-availability of suitable jobs. Unemployment is also a contributing factor in inducing the youth to join the militant movement. Moreover, they feel that if Khalistan is brought into existence, they will not remain unemployed. Also, militancy gave them a sharp communal identity, a purpose and meaning to life, and not the least, a sense of power.

One should not ignore the role of ISI of Pakistan. It also strongly motivates the youth to break away from the 'Hindu India' and establish

45 Dhillon, Kripal, Police and Politics in India, op. cit., pp. 474-477.
Khalistan. ISI also provides them with weapons and training. However, the Khalistan movement could not sustain itself because of a number of reasons. Firstly, due to excesses committed by the Sikh youth, they lost support of the people. Secondly, the Khalistan movement had no real mass base. Though it was based on the Anandpur Sahib resolution, the resolution itself proved to be highly controversial and subject to radically different interpretations. The main Akali Dals also hesitated to take any stand on creation of Khalistan. At the later stages, it was being supported mainly by Sikhs from Canada and USA. They probably thought once Khalistan is created they will have free hand in investing here and creating capitalist bastion which they found difficult to do in India. (Now India has drastically changed its economic policies and has adopted liberalisation allowing great scope for investments by the NRIs). Also, the ISI withdrew its support for political reasons and the Khalistan movement completely collapsed.

In the historical context, violence, as a mode of political articulation, has always been considered legitimate in the Panjab and, even more so, in the Sikh system of beliefs. The cultural and religious practice attributes a positive value to the use of violence to recover lost dignity and honour and to fight evil. The Sikh religious tradition legitimizes the use of violence, provided it has its base in human values. However, humanist militancy may frequently be replaced with martial militancy as an instrument of political protest under a given set of circumstances. Such circumstances came into play in the 1980s in the Panjab. Whether they can revive in another few decades, may be in a different but no less frightening dimension, remains to be seen. The Panjab has been witness to several movements in the past,
which used violence as a mode of interest articulation and the concerned
segments of the population responded to them very well. The Namdhari or
Kooka movement of 1858 was clearly rooted in militancy and was
anti-imperialist in character. The Ghadar Lehr, which originated in the USA
(1913-18), was also anti-imperialist in nature and mainly Sikh inspiration
and composition. Many Ghadarites later joined the red communist and
Naxalite movements in the former PEPSU state and continued to use
violence as a mode of political discourse. Such thinking inspired several
peasant movements in the Panjab. Sikh religion, as it developed over a
period of some two hundred years from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh,
itself sanctions taking up arms against unrelieved oppression and injustice.
This mode of political discourse has always suffused, at least, the subaltern
movements, though as a main stream activity, it became dominant only in
the decade of 1980s. The roots of such militancy could logically be traced
in the relationship of both individual and state violence with the underlying
social and political structure. The structural conditions and their interaction
with the state apparatus produced structural violence. Post-Independence
ruling establishments proved to be no different from the British colonial
rulers, in promoting antagonistic and assertive communal and religious
identities. In the case of the Panjab, this worked against the evolution of a
secular Panjabi identity. The ensuing conflicting relationship between
distinct identities, in the context of partisan nature of politics and asym-
metrical growth of economy, have not materially changed and will continue
to present an environment for retrogressive violent articulations.

81.
The structural reality continues to produce a dwarfed Panjabi identity and a blocked economy, finding it difficult to accommodate emerging agrarian interests and create greater employment opportunities. Politics is not representative, competitive and federal. The absence of conditions for conducive human development are instances of latent structural violence. The manifest form of violence was shaped by the opportunistic character of politics, underground economic activities, excessive reliance on the repressive state apparatus and, above all, on the external support.  

**Kashmir**

The conflict between India and Pakistan over the Himalayan territory of Kashmir is there since its eruption in 1947. It involves the earth’s second and tenth most populous states, commanding the world’s fourth and ninth largest armed forces. Yet in the constant cacophony of competing Indian and Pakistani claims to Jammu and Kashmir, the conflict usually gets presented as simply a long-running, intricate ‘territorial dispute’ between belligerent rival states. In this process, the aspirations and interests of the peoples who populate this benighted territory are frequently obscured.

One position on this conflict, reflected most frequently in the pronouncements of what might broadly be termed the Indian ‘establishment’ rests crucially on the claim that Jammu and Kashmir has,

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since 1947, been an integral and functional part of a ‘democracy’, and a ‘federal’ one, at that. Hence the current uprising is both illegitimate and anti-democratic. It simply cannot be regarded in any sense as a struggle for democratic rights and freedoms and of course as the product of an externally engineered conspiracy, masterminded by Pakistan, it cannot claim the mantle of an indigenously born emancipatory movement either. In any case, the notion of Kashmir’s constituting a social formation that might conceivably lay claim to the title of a people in its own rights is precluded by the Indian state’s legitimizing ideology, which holds, explicitly or implicitly, that the only bonafide ‘nation’ to which citizens owe the duty of allegiance, is the pan-Indian one. On the contrary, Indian military forces combating Pakistan-sponsored terrorists, the fundamentalists, are the true defenders of democracy, of the ‘nation’ and its territorial integrity and, of course, of ‘secularism’, the other pillar of the post-colonial Indian state. There are other causal elements involved as well, for example, rampant official corruption and biased and inequitable patterns of recruitment into government service. But these are merely subsidiary problems that have arisen because of the deeper malaise. Similarly, there is problem of continuing urban and especially, rural poverty, as well as widespread unemployment of educated youth in Kashmir Valley. Even so, economic factors do not seem to be the primary cause of civil strife. Poverty, corruption and unemployment in the subcontinent are not unique to Kashmir, though these problems have assumed some significance.

According to the vast majority of Kashmirs, this constitutes intolerable injustice and oppression and they are apparently prepared to
make considerable sacrifice in order to resist this oppression. The reason why they seem so insistent on ‘freedom’ is the conviction, born of their experiences, that their collective will for democratic, responsible and accountable government is incompatible with their presently coerced status, as an ‘integral part of India.’

It is recognized that both the regional and global circumstances of the Kashmir dispute had changed enormously in recent years and it is believed at the same time that informed and unfettered dialogue involving all parties concerned in this dispute was an absolutely essential ingredient in the search for resolution. The conditions of uncertainty that prevail do not allow the citizens to work for the country in the way they would like to do. If these conditions are brought mainly by the hatred and divisions then the nation has to work ceaselessly to wipe out these causes; they must be removed from the minds of people.

The nation must accept the reality that communalism is the cause of much of the chaos that we witness all around; that communities are here to stay with them; that they can not be washed away. They have to be accepted as part of us and all have to learn to accept them as part of our existence, love them, work with them, and leave their private life, beliefs, habits, social customs etc to themselves. The moment we cease to be obsessed about other people’s views, the moment we leave others in peace, they will leave us in peace. We should accept the fact that people have better things to do than to harbour only thoughts of murdering, killing, destroying all through their life. They have their varied responsibilities in
life. Hatred, discord and bitterness are not their profession or preoccupation or exclusive goal.

There is an urgent need for the political establishment to acknowledge and accept as a fact of life, particularly in today’s world, that its most important and primary task is to govern and govern with consent in the interest of majority. The nation must also realise that it can not make progress without a responsible, disciplined society. It is only a politically and socially disciplined society that can provide the base for proper functioning of the polity. Such a society is lacking in our midst because a vast majority of our people is ignorant, illiterate and gullible and other sections of it are lethargic, indifferent, selfish and disinterested in the affairs of the nation. It has left the governance of the nation into the hands of the most incompetent, say the corrupt, the indisciplined and the obscurantist. The country is on the verge of being taken over by the communalists, if this is allowed to continue, then the pillars on which this multi-cultural society rests will fall and disappear. This is what needs to be righted. It is also necessary to emphasise that government alone can not prevent conflicts or riots. If one is really serious about stopping large scale violence or conflicts, one has to initiate a real heart to heart process of understanding and appreciation of the problems. The more important need is for the saner elements within the conflicting parties to create an element of mutual trust and understanding at humane plane.