

State-Society Relations and the Security Dynamics of South Asia

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Abstract

The state society equation of South Asia remains skewed. This is largely because of the narrow, traditionalist security paradigm governing the region; this has not allowed the states of South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular to have pro-people policies. The paper also attempts to look at the various traditional and non-traditional sources of insecurity, impacting the societies of South Asia and the resultant impact on the security dynamics of the region. The augmenting factors of South Asian states temperament, the role of the state itself in its present and historical perspective, the developmentalist orientation, the nation versus state building dilemma and dictatorship versus democracy paradigm, the rising role of the civil society, an attempt at redefining security and last but not least the problems of governance are also touched upon. The paper concludes on the challenge of redefining a state in South Asian context.

South Asia remains one of the most conflict prone regions of the world because it continues to be governed by a narrow and conservative thinking on security, which subjugate everything to territorial survival and physical security leading to exorbitant military expenditures, which are in most cases considerably higher than social sector budgets.

The most important resource of South Asia is its people. By being home to one fourth of humanity it can boast of human dynamism few can rival and an enormous developmental potential. Unfortunately, the last fifty plus years are years of missed opportunities, where the region has lost out on all fronts i.e. social, economic and political. The vision for South Asia has three key elements to it. They are: a) a lasting peace between India and Pakistan; b) greater intra-regional trade and commerce eventually leading to an ideal situation of seven polities but a single integrated economy; and c) massive investment in human

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development.¹ The vision which perhaps is an outcome of the stark reality existing in most of the South Asian societies substantially depends on peace between the two protagonists of the region. Human development will remain a dream unless the impediments to achieving this are taken into account. The most pertinent being the concept of security.

The word 'Security' derives from the Latin *sine cura* meaning *freedom from care*. The concept of security being a fundamental one is elastic and ambiguous.² To be secure is to feel free from threats, anxiety, or danger. While in the international politics, the political leaders and its people consider themselves free only after seeing that nothing adverse can be done to them by other states, or by other foreign non-state actors. Thus, security emerges as a subjective concept and not an objective condition of being and largely remains a perception-oriented concept. States neither are secure nor completely insecure but experience either condition in degrees. Therefore, both for individuals and states, security is a contested notion.

The need to widen the meaning of security in global politics was recognized by statesmen of prominence long before it achieved a certain fashionable character following the end of the Cold War whereby the realist orthodoxy of the balance of power as a necessary condition for peace had been undermined. A widening of security studies took place and the wideners (including neo-realist) favor extending the subject to incorporate non-military issues. The simple logic behind this was that throughout history people have been killed by things other than weapons and states have been weakened or destroyed by forces other than military conflict. Ullman³ (1983) and Mathew⁴ (1989) wanted to include environmental issues and anything that threatens drastically the quality of life in the inhabitants of a state or threaten significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to

¹ Khadija Haq, *The South Asian Challenge* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.xii.

² See Edward Kolodziej, 'Security studies for the next millennium: Quovadis?' *ACDIS Occasional Papers* (Illinois, net version, 2000); see Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998) also see Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear; The National Security Problem in International Relations* (New Delhi: Transasia Publisher, 1987).

³ R. Ullman, 'Redefining Security', *International Security*, 1983.

⁴ J. Mathews, 'Redefining Security', *Foreign Affairs* (London), Vol. 68, No.2, 1989.

private non-governmental entities within the state. Ayoob⁵ (1990) another proponent of widener of security studies highlighted that internal rather than external threats were the principle security concerns of most less developed countries. Peterson and Sebnus⁶ made the same point with reference to the most developed and powerful state – the USA, pointing out that crisis in education and growing economic underclass should be understood as security threats. Lynn-Jones and Miller⁷ addressed the need to give attention to a range of previously neglected internal and external threats such as virulent nationalism and the social impact of migration. Widening of security debate was simply extending the range of factors that affect state power beyond the confines of military and trade affairs. All of this led to the groundbreaking new approach to security when Buzan⁸ teamed up with Weaver and De Wilde that came to be characterized as the Copenhagen school.⁹

In extending the domain of the security studies is the deepening approach led by pluralist and social constructivists. Deepeners embrace the concept of ‘human security’ and to them the chief referent object of security or the consumer of security should be the individual. Falk,¹⁰ for example, considers that security ought to be defined as the negation of insecurity specifically, experienced by individual and groups in concrete situations. This is a significant leap

⁵ M. Ayoob, ‘Defining Security: A Subaltern Realist Perspective’ in K. Kraue and M. William, *Critical Security Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp.121-46.

⁶ P. Peterson and J. Sebnus, ‘Rethinking America’s Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order’ in G. Allison and G. Trevorton (eds.), *The Primacy of the Domestic Agenda* (New York: W.W Norton, 1992), pp.57-93.

⁷ S. Lynn Jones and S. Miller, *Global Dangers: Changing Dimensions of International Security* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

⁸ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fears: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era*, 2nd edition (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

⁹ The Copenhagen school has done systematic research into the logic of security. It considers the construction of a security problem as social or inter-subjective phenomena. The Copenhagen school argues against the view that the core of security studies is war and force instead, it constructs a more radical view of security studies by exploring threats to referent objects that are non-military as well as military.

¹⁰ R. Falk, *On Humane Governance, Toward a New Global Politics* Cambridge, 1995.

from the widening concept. The wideners in security studies (including neo-realist) favor extending the subject to incorporate non-military issues which affect the security of the state. However, the deepening approach to security studies in international relations while widening upon the range of issues introduced a shift in the focus of the discipline to human security rather than of states.

This should include:

- Military threats to security from states
- Military threats to security from non-state actors
- Economic threats to security
- Social identity as a threat to security
- Environmental threat to security
- Health threat to security
- Criminal threats to security¹¹

Tackling these threats require global thinking and global actions and are indicative of the fact that the present state system is inadequate for the satisfaction of human security and calls for global integration. This has also given impetus to political integrations at the regional level. In fact, regional integrations are easier to achieve and manage than global integration.

The concept of security has traditionally been defined in terms of states and the qualities of statehood. This definition essentially means states oppose one another, mistrust each other, compete and survive by protecting their territorial integrity and the physical well being of their citizens. As a consequence, security has been defined as the absence of physical threat to the territorial and functional integrity of a given state.¹² Such a security requires the unity and loyalty of the population within the state and even repression has been considered justified if there were threats, real or imagined, to the territorial integrity of the state. South Asian states' political history is replete with examples of it.

The security picture since eighties has been changing because of international developments such as the end of the Cold War and the process of globalization.¹³ There is now a growing debate on security

¹¹ For detail see Peter Hough, *Understanding Global Security* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹² Barry Buzan, *op.cit.*

¹³ Gowher Rizvi, *South Asia in a Changing International Order* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993). Also see Iftikharuzzaman (ed.), *South Asian Security: Primacy of Internal Dimension* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1995); Stephen P. Cohen (ed.), *The Security of South Asia:*

from global, regional, national and sub-national perspectives, which challenge the dominant paradigm of state security enforced through military means. Olaf Palme,¹⁴ as Chairman of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security, was the first to emphasize the need for the concept of *comprehensive security*, achievable through cooperation and based on the principles of equity, justice and reciprocity. The idea of comprehensive security originated in Japan in the early 1970s. It was based on the notion that security was not restricted to military issues alone but is comprehensive in character. It was defined as a chain of tautly balanced national power, including various factors such as economy, diplomacy and politics.¹⁵ In 1994, the United Nations introduced *human security*¹⁶ as a people-centric approach in which security consists of secure environment, food, social and medical

American and Asian Perspectives (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

¹⁴ Olaf Palme won his first term as prime minister of Switzerland in 1968 and served until 1976; he was re-elected prime minister in 1982, and again in September 1985. Besides opposing the war in Vietnam, Palme was also critical of the nuclear arms race – serving as chairman of the Palme Commission, which put forward numerous proposals on disarmament. The Palme Commission issued the 1982 report, *Common Security*, which argued that both East and West have legitimate security needs. It can never be possible, the Commission said, to demand unilateral security for one bloc based on superior military resources. On the contrary, in a world of incomprehensibly destructive nuclear potential, every ideological offensive toward military supremacy is a threat to universal security. Between 1980 and 1982, he mediated 5 times on behalf of the UN, seeking a peaceful settlement in the war between Iran and Iraq. Palme was also tireless in his efforts to promote international action against Apartheid – especially in the aftermath of the Soweto massacre of 1976, and at the height of South African civil unrest beginning in 1984. He was instrumental in obtaining a firm commitment from Socialist International in support of the African liberation struggle, and he constantly challenged the major western powers that obstructed international action. He was always abreast of developments in southern Africa and paid great attention to the views of the leaders of liberation movements, with whom he frequently met. As an ardent opponent of Apartheid, he applauded the Palestine Liberation Army and Castro's Cuba. Tragically, on 28 February 1986, in Stockholm, Olaf Palme was assassinated at the age of 59.

¹⁵ John Chapman, R. Driyte and I.T.M. Grow, *Japan's Quest for Comprehensive Security* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983), p.XIV.

¹⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

security. In the words of the UN Commission on Global Governance, ‘...lasting security will not be achieved until it can be shared by all, and it can only be achieved through cooperation, based on the principles of equity, justice and reciprocity’.¹⁷ Comprehensive security combines the idea of human security with the classical approach of state security, and is an object of the ongoing discussion and elaboration. A working definition of comprehensive security could be the absence of threats against physical and functional well being and their forms of political and social organization.

The pertinent query and our focus here is that are these new approaches and understanding of security of value and relevance to South Asia. The issue is debatable. South Asia is still stuck in the Cold War paradigm of security. Indo-Pakistan rivalry over the status of Kashmir is as old as both countries and remains insolvable. For now it has taken the form of a Cold War-esque nuclear rivalry. There is virulent nationalism attached to it, and in spite of the progress made in the recent Indo-Pak relations the peace process is precarious and hostage to terrorist attacks. The incidents like Samjhota Express in 2007 and 26/11 Mumbai attacks in 2008 resulted in the complete breakdown of the composite dialogue from 2007 to 2010; the resumption is sluggish at best and is due to international pressure. The latest offer of dialogue by India was notably followed by the decision of the United States government to issue a fresh travel alert for India on 30 January 2010 warning of possible terrorist attacks similar to the coordinated attacks in Mumbai in November 2008. It also comes amid a period of renewed militant infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Indian and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. These developments reaffirm the region’s precarious security environment and the possibility of renewed conflict.¹⁸

India has hardened military establishment stance on the Siachen issue, where talks have failed for the tenth time. The failure of the Wullar barrage talks again for the tenth time point towards the crippling trust deficit between the two states. The blame game has also started once again. Proof of the failure of regionalism is starkly presented by the hundreds of miles of barbed wire fencing put up by India along large stretches of its borders with Bangladesh and Pakistan. Rigidities along

¹⁷ Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood: the Report of the Commission on Global Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LB10Df05.html (last accessed on 03/11/2010).

frontiers seem to be growing rather than loosening. There is a paradigm shift in India's strategic defense thinking, post Mumbai attacks India's defense preparedness is more focused on the immediate threat from Pakistan. Operation Cold Start¹⁹ and India's massive \$50 billion modernization plan have been planned accordingly. The Obama administration has proposed a five year \$2.8 billion military aid package to Pakistan to fight militants. If need arises arms can and will be deployed against India. All of this has resulted in a South Asian arms race. Multilateral friendships become difficult when there are bilateral animosities. Talking about peace while constantly preparing for war gives you the kind of peace which is at best absence of war. The impact of this investment in conflict is extremely large and borne usually by the poor of the two countries. The states of South Asia need to jointly face the challenges in order to bring an end to the inward looking era in which each state fends for itself in the face of problems that can essentially be handled collectively in a dynamic regional setting. The above discourse makes it imperative to indulge in a detailed discussion on the role of the state in South Asia and the resultant state society imbalance.

South Asian states temperament

By temperament the South Asian states are interventionists where the society space is curtailed and thus there is incongruence between state-society relations. This in articulation then becomes responsible for conflict. This conflict necessitated debate over the proper role of public and private sectors. In Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Kautiliya's *Arthashastra*, Ibn-e-Khaldoon's *The Muqaddimah* or the writings of Confucius have all debated the issues of mutual rights and obligations of state and citizens.²⁰ The twentieth century literature, produced on comprehensive security, also refocused attention on the role of the state by looking into the issues of role and behavior of the state. Critique of

¹⁹ In 2005 India announced a new military doctrine called Start Cold mainly targeting Pakistan as its potential enemy. In November 2009, Indian army chief made a statement that there is a possibility of a limited war between Pakistan and India in a nuclear overhang. In December 2009, Indian chief announced that India is ready to take on both Pakistan and China in a 'two front war' simultaneously. These statements spurred a quick reaction in Pakistani media and military establishment. <http://wondersofpakistan.wordpress.com/2010/01/26/operation-cold-start-the-possible-war-scenario-between-india-pakistan-china/> (last accessed on 25/10/2010).

²⁰ 'The Evolving Role of the State', *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World* (New York: Oxford University Press), p.20.

the concept like Barry Buzan²¹ and those belonging to the Copenhagen School have pointed out the inadequacies of the state-centric approach by highlighting the duality of security by bringing forward two essential components, namely, sovereignty including territorial integrity and the societal security that includes identity. Hence they make relations between state and society a crucial starting point for security related studies. South Asia is seemingly passing through a transitional phase where the state-centric approach has not lessened, but the thrust towards people-centric approach stands heightened and considered relevant in the thinking circles of the region.

The dilemma facing the twenty first century world is the new role of the state; its effectiveness and the emerging security anxieties. The quest for national security today has brought the focus on reevaluating the role of the state in the state-security nexus. This also implies that fuller understanding needs to be built on the issues related to the role of the state and civil society relations in comprehending the related themes of governance, development and soft state crises, particularly in the case of the South Asia. The submission of this discourse is that the states of South Asia are over regulated, extended, and repressive. The state at the same time is unresponsive, incapable, and a soft state. This discourse will be an exercise into why this dichotomy exists in the state persona of South Asia, and aims at understanding its linkages to the unresolved conflicts of the region and the resultant security paradigm.

Role of the state

The state is a legal concept 'describing a social group that occupies a defined territory and is organized under common political institutions and an effective government'.²² The German political sociologist and economic historian, Max Weber, established many of the parameters of statehood which are still common to discussion a century later. According to Weber, state could not be defined in terms of its goals and functions, but rather it needs to be understood in terms of its distinctive means. He argued:

'The state cannot be defined in terms of its ends. There is scarcely any task that some political association has not taken in hand and there is no task that one could say has

²¹ Barry Buzan, *op.cit.* Also see Barry Buzan, Ole and Jaap de- Wilde (eds.), *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

²² Jack C. Plano and Roy Olton, *The International Relations Dictionary, Fourth edition* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1988).

always been exclusive and peculiar to those associations which are designed as political ones.... Ultimately, one could define the modern state only in terms of the specific *means* peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of political force’.

Apparently to Weber, the modern state was a particular form of *the state* which was itself, a particular form of a more general category of *political associations*. A compulsory political organization with continuous operations will be called a *state* in so far as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claims to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order.... [The modern state] possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation, to which the organized activities of the administrative staff which are also controlled by regulations, are oriented. This system of orders claims binding authority not only over members of the state, the citizens, most of whom have obtained membership by birth, but also to a very large extent in the area of its jurisdictions. It is, thus, a compulsory organization with a territorial basis. Furthermore, today, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only, so far as, it is either permitted by the state... the claim of the modern state to monopolize the use of force is as essential to it as its character of compulsory jurisdiction and continuous operation.²³ The South Asian states fit into the categorization, however they have degenerated into technocratic machines serving a narrow power group that is kept in power by hordes of security men at the top and a regime of terror and repression at the bottom, kept going by millions of people who keep on producing goods and services for the system for if they did not everything would collapse.²⁴ A reality that has brought forward the two forces working in opposite directions in the South Asian states namely the forces that support and work to maintain status-quo and the others which work to bring a change.

²³ Christopher Pierson, *The Modern State* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.5-6.

²⁴ Rajni Kothari, Ghanshyam Shah (eds.), *Masses, Classes and the State, Social Movements and the State: Readings in Indian Government and Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), p.75. The idea has been discussed in detail by Kothari in the larger context of the third world. The recent developments in the international political arena has seen the making, strengthening and the consolidation of the two forces i.e. the force that works to maintain ‘status-quo’ and the forces of ‘change’. The two simultaneous tendencies have contributed in strengthening contradictory perceptions and have thus resulted in violence and increased repressiveness.

The forces of status quo amongst that exist a national consensus about security that is one sided and exclusionary. Those who are working for a change are challenging this national consensus on security.

Historical perspective

Looking back at the recent history of the region, the regional states inherited a relatively strong state at its inception. This manifestation of state power originated in the all- powerful bureaucracy established by the British in the South Asian sub-continent. The legacy served to establish the ascendance of the state in the region. This also enabled it to exercise considerable authority in its relations with civil society. In post-colonial regional developments, the authority of the state was used to empower the particular faction of the feudal elites and the bourgeoisie through dispensation of state patronage. However over the years in all the of South Asian states, in varying degrees, the once powerful state has been exposed to a process of downsizing under the pressure of externally driven economic reforms. Such a process of disempowerment has gradually eroded the autonomy of the state, compared to what it was in the immediate post-independence period. The change that is attributed to globalization, while, at the core of the change is the transformation of South Asian economies in a peculiarly capital driven manner that perhaps aimed to dismantle, redefine and restructure states, social relations, and inter-state affairs as well. The impact of globalization and market forces not only weakened the state but also de-linked it from the citizenry.²⁵ However, in spite, of the fact that the state has regressed on the economic front, it continues to be interventionist on other fronts such as social, cultural, and political. The factors that have contributed towards it are:

- Unilateral focus on development;
- Nation/state building; and
- Dictatorship/democracy.

Developmentalist orientation

The main thrust of events in the post colonial world was towards security, order, and strengthening states to carry out specific tasks. The post-colonial states moved towards consolidating their power using the ideology of development while the post-colonial societies gave their

²⁵ Jayadeva Uyangoda, 'Security's insecurity: South Asia's states, societies and citizens in the age of globalization' in Rajesh M. Basrur (ed.), *Security in the New Millennium: Views from South Asia* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2001), p.115.

states the enormous power in every domain. The goal of becoming a modern, developed state was not questioned. It was taken to be a sacred *given*. The reason for which probably was the subordination of everything else to development. Perhaps it was the legacies of underdevelopment that allowed it. Politics came to be subordinated to economics.²⁶

This developmentalist orientation²⁷ was also endorsed by both the Soviet Union and the West. It was based on the notion of control where the economists were of the view that change was inevitable and leads in the direction of progress. Assuming that human societies evolve according to certain laws in a comprehensible fashion and can be controlled; justifies human intervention in directing development into desirable directions.²⁸ The ideal state according to this paradigm was allowed to become both interventionist and developmentalist.

The development syndrome apparently empowered the state, more than any ideology. Therefore, any limits on the concept of political power or optimum political power, accountability, principles of democracy and participation, and respect for human rights were all subordinated to the concept of whether the state could achieve and deliver development. The developing countries of South Asia, therefore, came out of the colonial past with a strong inclination towards state sponsored economic development making the state control economy the objective of their strategy.²⁹ Across the region similar policies were followed planning, protectionism, overvalued exchange rates, neglect of human capital, profligacy in public budgeting, dependence on foreign aid. The results were similar low growth rates and persistent poverty with crises conditions due to foreign reserves constraints been hit.³⁰ The fallout was not seen only on the economic front. The process also resulted in the gradual erosion of the space that originally belong to the civil society and the individual.

The state dominated development paradigm which became the logic for the over extension of states in South Asia has failed. For

²⁶ Neera Chandhoke, 'The assertion of civil society against the state: the case of the post-colonial world' in Manoranjan Mohanty, Partha Nath Mukherji and Olle Tornquist (eds.), *Peoples, Rights, Social Movements And The State in the Third World* (New Delhi/London: Sage Publications, 1998), p.32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.33-4.

²⁹ *World Development Report 1997, op.cit.*

³⁰ Meghnad Desai, *Development and Nationhood: Essays in the Political Economy of South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.275.

instance, Pakistan ranks 123rd while India ranks 51st and Bangladesh ranks 107th in the Human Development Index out of 180 countries (The annual UN Human Development Report 2009-10). The latest report notes that South Asia has less poverty and higher average incomes than Sub-Saharan Africa but South Asian percentage of underweight women is four times higher and its child malnutrition rate is 20 per cent higher.

Currently South Asian economy has grown immensely, it is evolving as the world political economic giant, this economic growth is largely by India but others have made modest growth. However the region has been unable to transform its growth into equitable human progress. There is immense disparity amongst the rich and the poor of the region and it's continues to house the world's largest population of the poor. This rich poor gap according to conflict experts is responsible for both inter and intra state conflict in the region. It completely dilutes the concept of the human security and is indicative of how state is unresponsive to societal needs in spite of economic growth and progress.

The state is effective³¹ when it is responsive to societal needs and works to narrow the gap between people and government through broad-based participation and decentralization. Such an approach globally has helped to check arbitrary state actions and control entrenched corruption. The state must focus what it is capable of doing and then only undertake those tasks.³²

Nation / state building

The second factor/issue identified was the issue of nation/state building, its prerequisites and the problems confronted. The intensity of the problem though has varied among the regional states, however, it is confronted by all.

Nation, nationalism, and nationhood are all products of the colonial legacy and are alien to South Asian history. The objective of this was the construction of common political culture, submerging the past political traditions to the new requisites of social innovation and super imposition of an ideology. Therefore South Asian nations have been described by Emerson as nations 'Not yet nations in being but only nations in hope' whereas, Gertz describes the problem as a dilemma of 'old societies and new states' where region based primordial sentiments

³¹ Effectiveness of a state can be enhanced in two ways, first by matching the state role to its capability and the second to raise the state capacity.

³² *World Development Report 1997, op.cit.*

are yet to be transformed into trans-regional civil sentiments.³³ Along with nation building the assignment of state building was also taking place in all the South Asian states. State building was initiated by the Europeans. It functioned in their presence because of their alien status; they could act as neutral arbitrators, controlling ethnic diversities and differences quite amicably. In the post colonial South Asia, state building and nation building became synonymous. The Cold War policies of the two super powers also contributed to this phenomenon. In actuality, state building and nation building are two different things; they involve opposite and contrasting processes. Considering them synonymous creates vested interests to interplay the differences inherently present in pluralistic societies. State building implies refurbishing the administrative machinery and the centralization of authority whereas nation building stipulates dispersion of power, co-option of peripheral groups, and decentralization. The objective should be an articulation between the two, which remains elusive.

State building and nation building did not progress smoothly in South Asia because one was done at the expense of the other. This resulted in splitting the tribes, communities, people, and nationalities and placed them oddly and arbitrarily into separate states carved out of the empire. The anti-colonial ideology, for some time allowed the submergence of their identity under the garb of potential nations. An implicit stipulation of this particular development was that these several entities were to work for the utilization of the rights and aspirations within the framework of the new states.³⁴ Thus what emerged as a result was a conflict between state building orientations and nation building requirements. Moreover, in present day context the process of centralization and state building is increasingly challenged by a variety of social and ethnic movements. The consolidation of the state, thus became a source of conflict between the state and the society because the all-powerful states continue to be challenged from non-state actors. The nature of the conflict between the two forces allowed violence. Today this is no longer the monopoly of the state alone, but various

³³ Clifford Gertz, *The Integrative Revolution* (New York: Free Press, 1963), p.109.

³⁴ Ishtiaq Ahmed, *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia* (London/New York: Continuum International publishing Group, 1998), p.9.

transnational³⁵ and sub-national forces³⁶ resort to violence to pursue their demands and agenda.

Dictatorship versus democracy

The relative success of democracy in India and its failure in neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh are also dimensions of state-society in articulation in the region. The political process in Pakistan and Bangladesh remained hostage to highly inequitable state structures. The imbalance in the state structures and also between them and the civil society foreclosed the possibility of a significant re-apportioning of political power and economic resources.³⁷ The relatively autonomous political process in India did not generate the kind of pressures needed to forge the state structures to undertake major redistributive measures. Alliances between the dominant caste and classes both within the ruling parties and the non-elected institutions of the state used the democratic rubric to perpetuate economic and social inequalities. Populism in India as well as in Pakistan and Bangladesh proved to be a façade for providing grounds for a greater reassertion of authoritarian tendencies rooted in the state structure and the political economy.³⁸

The argument presented by Ayesha Jalal in the preceding paragraph rightly points out towards the equation of dominance and privilege that is prevalent in South Asia. The military and bureaucratic structure in Pakistan and Bangladesh and dominance of a political party (Congress) in India, having links in the bureaucracy and the military endorses authoritarianism. If Pakistan and Bangladesh have a history of military dominance then India also has an imperfect majoritarian democracy, which in spite of being intact and functioning, has not been able to remove gross inequalities and social injustice. The politics of dominance and privilege being a part and parcel of Indian democracy has weakened the state more. Rasheed-ud-din Khan³⁹ called the Indian state

³⁵ Transnational forces are movements working for secession that are collaborating across borders which include Kashmiris (JKLF), Maoists in Nepal, Tamils (LTTE) and Baloch movement (BLA).

³⁶ Muhajirs, Sindhis, Siraikis in Pakistan, Chakmas and Beharis in Bangladesh, youth insurrections in Sri Lanka, Sikh unrest, Naxilite movement in India are a few pertinent examples.

³⁷ Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1995).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.121.

³⁹ Rasheed-ud-din Khan, 'The total state and the Indian political system' in Z. Hasan, S.N. Jha and Rasheed-uddin-Khan (eds.), *The State, Political*

a total state as compared to the totalitarian state. The *total state* is not based only on terror and one party dictatorship, rather the term refers to the unlimited range, extent, and exercise of legitimate power by the state over the rest of the society. The concept is also endorsed by Hamza Alvi⁴⁰ when he talks about the *over developed* state of Pakistan. The concept of total state or over developed state is that the state is all encompassing with unlimited reach because of a political system where the control over the society is effective and complete. To check this trend, the role of society comes to the fore.

The continuous inability of South Asian elite to forge a binding and lasting link between state and society is due to the absence of democratic covenants making redemptive links between state and society. The new liberal initiative of a limited state role in the South Asian context is only happening on the economic front. The state has retreated from the spheres of economics allowing private capital to function relatively free of state control. In the political, social, and cultural spheres, the role of the South Asian states remain extended and interventionist.⁴¹ The withdrawal only in the economic sphere has a negative connotation because the social role of the state stands diminished leaving the poor and the marginalized at the mercy of the market. The results are troubling citizens turned against states, state and society are militarized, and urban despair proliferates.⁴²

Role of civil society

A review of the available literature is indicative that state effectiveness is greatly dependent on an aware and active society. In spite of their differences, scholars agree that civil society is anchored to equality and rights.⁴³ Civil society is a western concept, which brought significant

Processes, and Identity: Reflections on Modern India (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1989), pp.42-5.

⁴⁰ Hamza Alvi, 'The state in post-colonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh' in K. Gough and H. P. Sharma (eds.), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp.145-95.

⁴¹ Jayadeva Uyangoda, *op.cit.*, pp.143-44.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.146-57.

⁴³ T.K. Ommen, *Nation, Civil Society and Social Movements: Essays in Political Sociology* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (New Burnswick: 1980), <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/8646>. Also see R. Kothari, *State Against Democracy: In Search of Human Governance* (New Delhi: Agents Press, 1988). P. Chatterjee, 'Beyond the nation? or within?', *Economic and*

changes first in European society and then in North American society in the post-industrial revolution period. Civil society denotes the state of society in which patterns of association are accepted and endorsed by the members. Most users of the term were influenced by state of nature theory, seeing the individual as an atomic constituent of the civil society, which is composed by contract, consent, or submission from these self-dependent atoms.⁴⁴

Positive political activism in a society can act both as an overseer and a pressure generating institution. The active participation of all segments of society is obviously workable in democratic and pluralistic political structures. It is the eventual electoral process where accountability of the state is actually enacted. Society cannot hold the state accountable unless its political power base lies with people. The power base that has to be renewed now and then and where abuse of power could result in losing it is the ideal state-society equation.

Civil society is a networking of relationships like state, society, political, economic and social institutions, and a cluster of interest groups such as political parties, religious and cultural associations etc. The objective of a civil society is to strengthen the political, economic, and social institutions, which protects and safeguards the individual rights from any kind of authoritarianism at both state and societal level. It has also been described as a no man's land between family and the state.⁴⁵ The civil society notion is not new. Philosophers like John Locke,⁴⁶ Adam Ferguson,⁴⁷ Jean Jacques Rousseau⁴⁸ and Immanuel Kant⁴⁹ played with the idea of civil society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The concept of civil society was, in fact, deeply rooted in the enlightenment. It is about the fundamental, experiential, and relational connection between individuals going about their own lives

Political Weekly, Vol.32 (1), pp.4-11. In spite of the differences, authors agreed that civil society is anchored to equality and rights.

⁴⁴ Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1982).

⁴⁵ Mustapha Kamal Pasha, 'The hyper extended state, civil society and democracy', in Rasool Bakhsh Rais (ed.), *State, Society and Democratic Change in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.185.

⁴⁶ John Locke, *Two Treaties of Civil Government*, London, 1924.

⁴⁷ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, New Brunswick: 1980.

⁴⁸ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Trans. Maurice Cranston/Harmonds Worth, 1968.

⁴⁹ Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant Selections*, New York, 1988.

and members of society doing what they are told.⁵⁰ It was not considered separate from political society, as the wider notion of citizenship from the bases of social order, both *civil* and *society* was regarded as the opposite to barbarism and savagery. To Karl Marx, civil society as such only develops with bourgeoisies being bed rock of the state and economic infrastructure. This exposed the narrow basis of the state and brought into question the legitimacy of holding power over revolutionary classes.⁵¹ However, Gramsci⁵² provides a middle ground between the primordial and the political postulating a continuous contestation over norms and values. His model has become more relevant after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a new Europe.

Though the concept of civil society is rooted in the Renaissance period, the importance laid on its efficacy is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The revival of the concept apparently is a consequence primarily of two reasons. One, as a response to social, political, and economic changes in Eastern Europe, perhaps it was conceived as a part of a political strategy to create democratic space vis-à-vis the totalitarian state. Two, the failure of the state to bring about sustainable development, social cohesion and political stability. Viewing it in the South Asian context, civil society stands for an intermediary space occupied by voluntary and non-governmental organizations, especially those dealing with human rights. Therefore, the growth and expansion of civil society leads to democratic advancement. The more developed, active, and aware the civil society is the more accountable state would be. It is said to control state and subject state practices to critical evaluation,⁵³ counter hegemonic forces of the state, and provide space for dissent, for interrogation and above all reformation of the state apparatus of governance.⁵⁴ Thus, making enhanced accountability of the state result

⁵⁰ Keith Tester, *Civil Society*, London, 1992, p.5.

⁵¹ Karl Marx, *Early Texts*, translated by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁵² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp.208-09.

⁵³ Karl-Heinz Kramer, 'Democracy and civil society in the Himalayas: problem of implementation and participation in multiethnic societies', *Pakistan Horizon* (Karachi), 52:3 (July 1999), p.38.

⁵⁴ Amina Mohsin, 'Confidence building and security co-operation in South Asia: the role of civil society', in Mohammad Humayun Kabir (ed.), *Confidence Building Measures and Security Co-operation in South Asia: Challenges in the New Century* (Dhaka: Academic Press Limited, 2000), p.242.

in a more responsive and capable state. This is probably why writers and thinkers of contrasting political thought such as conservative, liberal, radical see civil society as the site of utility, civility, and freedom. All these are central to development and the growth of healthy societies. These include the transformation of economy, self discovery, breaking away with the colonial past, and getting integrated in to the global political economy. It is not an end in itself; it's a mean to an end. Generally speaking, a representative and responsive political system popularly elected and enjoying a plural mandate is the net result as well as the prerogative of a mature civil society.⁵⁵ Civil society basically is a rejection of authoritarianism of all types in favor of devolution of power and democracy. In the South Asian context the dilemma for both the civil society and the state is mutual hostility. The martial-law regimes in Pakistan and Bangladesh and the emergency government of Indra Gandhi in India are examples of deliberate efforts to weaken the civil society.

Redefining security

The biggest challenge to state-society relations has been the redefinition of security. The state-centric paradigm of security stands diluted, however, state continues to be central to the discourse on security even with the people-centric orientation. The state at once is the biggest violator of security and also a primary instrument for the attainment of a secure existence for its citizens. Various discourses on human rights and human security have highlighted the importance of the role of the state. For the only viable option of handling human security is to make state responsible and accountable for human security and human rights implementation. The international covenants and treaties also subscribe to this end. All the agreements for the implementation of human rights and prevention of human rights abuses are between states and the international institutions.

The extent to which state attends to its people's security needs, ultimately depends on its accountability to the people, which in turn, depends on the effective functioning of democracy. In South Asia, the expanded people-centric conception of security is gradually finding a voice in the well entrenched power structure of the state and society. The vital non-traditional security issues that stand to challenge the overextended total state of South Asia include poverty of all kinds, institutional decay and citizenry being pushed to the periphery,

⁵⁵ Iftikhar H. Malik, *State and Civil Society in Pakistan: Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997), p.5.

extremism, and terrorism. The need today is democratization of opportunities, the non-repressive handling of ethnic and sectarian identities, religious, gender and political legitimacy. The authoritarian nature of the state while taking over the space of the civil society causes its fragmentation by establishing strategic alliances with opinion builders and other important components of civil society such as religious, students, laborers and women leaders. The redefined concept of security needs a re-thinking of the role of the state where it can maintain a delicate balance between state functionaries, societal rights and its obligations. For appropriate state functioning, societal rights have to be granted and protected for a civil society to flourish. However, simultaneously, societal obligations have to be met, including the liberal concept of social responsibility.

A balanced state-society equation in South Asia would mean a move towards political and economic reforms that will define a new social contract inclusive of an agenda for consensus and change. The challenge is to overcome the fear of creating more democratic space and to move away from the notion that diversity is dangerous. To convince the poor and underprivileged of South Asia that democracy offers more than a list of abstract rights, the consolidation of democracy is fundamental for the satisfaction of their basic needs. The issues of unilateral focus on development, the conflict between nation and state building, and the dichotomy between dictatorship and democracies discussed have necessitated the study of the issues of development governance.

Problems of governance

Governance can be defined as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources for development.⁵⁶ Governance is also said to be a process whereby citizens' needs and interests are articulated for the positive social and economic development of the entire society in light of a perceived common good.

Governance means more than government; it refers to a political process that encompasses the whole society and contributes to the making of citizens, active contributors to the social contracts that bind them together.

Their sense of political efficacy is one of the indicators of democratic governance.⁵⁷ The UNDP submission on governance is

⁵⁶ *Governance and Development* (Washington D.C.: World Bank 1992).

⁵⁷ UNESCO, *Capacity-building for Governance*, Paris, 1997.

[the] exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs at all levels. It is the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interest, exercise their legal rights and obligations, and mediate their differences.⁵⁸

The general acceptable definitions of governance expose a fair amount of convergence. It encompasses a wide range of issues starting from efficient governments where accountability and transparency are emphasized upon, to concerns about human rights, social cohesion, equity, democracy, and political participation.

Issues of governance have received increasingly serious attention from researchers, policy makers, and the international development community. Problems faced by the world in the South to a large extent are attributed to problems of mis-governance.⁵⁹ The issues of governance include controlling corruption, institutional development, democracy, capacity building, transparency, rule of law and human rights' protection.⁶⁰ Since the problems of governance are endemic in all the states of South Asia. The governance here is described as the incapacity of governments to govern. It has cost the people serious deprivations resulting in poor quality of life and a persistent sense of insecurity. Despite democratization there seems to be a general lack of transparency and accountability. The increasing politicization of administration has made public servants less amenable to discipline and accountability. Good governance is not the aim of the ruling elite. Power seems to be the motivating and moving spirit behind politics of the region. According to the 1999 Human Development Report, South Asia has emerged as one of the most poorly governed regions in the world; from inefficient and inequitable deployment of resources and crippling debt burden to social divisions drawn on ethnic and sectarian lines.⁶¹ The eroding democracy, rampant corruption, crises of governance, deprivation of the poor,

⁵⁸ UNDP, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, New York: 1997.

⁵⁹ Mick Moore, 'Political underdevelopment: what causes 'bad governance''. Variants of parts of this paper have been presented at seminars at Birmingham, the LSE, MIT, Oxford, Reading, Roskilde, Sussex, Turin, the World Bank, and Yale.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Khadija Haq, *Human Development Report 1999*, <http://www.pakistaneconomist.com/issue1999/issue40/f&m2.htm/>.

economic crises, and vulnerability of civil society organizations in the countries are all cited as contributing and augmenting factors.⁶²

The logic behind mis-governance is simplistic. To move towards modernity, growth and development the states in South Asia became over extended, taking upon itself more than it could handle, and deliver. The inherently coercive nature of the state also contributed towards disturbing the equilibrium that should exist between state and society for productive functioning. The reason for this is political underdevelopment which is an outcome of uneven economic development amongst other things. The transitional status between tradition and modernity causes problems anywhere. It was more problematic in the region because it was forced and accelerated through interactions between developing and developed countries.⁶³ Moreover, in South Asia and the developing world at large, the ruling elite are able to ignore their citizens and rule more coercively because of the resources and support they (elite) are able to garner from their relations with other states, the international state system, and the international markets. This disconnect is present because they are financially independent of their citizenry and are able to use international connections and resources to rule over their citizens in a relatively unrestrained fashion. The public authority is constructed in a context where there is less bargaining between states and societies.⁶⁴ This is largely more applicable to the states in the region that have authoritarian setups.

The issues of eroding democracy, poverty, illiteracy, gender discrimination, human rights violations, state brutality, police and paramilitary terror, in short the exploitation of the people by state, all call for the rethinking of the state role and alternative strategies of development. The generous allocation of funds to non-development sectors, a typical characteristic of the third world states, have left important social sectors in doldrums, thus damaging the very basis of civil society, and also dodging the basic question of sovereignty of the people. The routine involvement of the military, paramilitary forces, and security services such as Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in ethnic conflicts clearly show how violent the state

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Mick Moore *op.cit.*, Also see Jackson Rh, *Quasi States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁶⁴ Mick Moore, *op.cit.*

has become.⁶⁵ Violence and terror have been employed extensively in the Indian Punjab, Kashmir and in the case of Tamils.

An important parameter of political development is the ability of citizens to control the leadership of the state in an institutionalized fashion, which is a broad definition of democracy. Political democracy across South Asia has not taken root with nearly fifty nationwide elections since the end of the British *Raj*. Although with the exception of Bhutan, the other South Asian countries have elected governments, democratic institutions are not entrenched in the political system. Moreover, in a relatively mature democracy like India, the political system is biased towards the interest of the elites.⁶⁶ Personal and family ties, appeals of cults and superstitions, dogmas, and false images of divinity, sectarian and communal loyalties, and outright corruption and nepotism are widespread in the politics of India. The underlying causes for this manifestation are internal colonization of states, state suppression and inability of the state to meet the demand of their citizens.

Redefined or model state

South Asia has to work towards acquiring a balance between its state and societal constructs. It also has to work towards defeating the interest groups that polarize society and do not allow obvious solutions to be implemented. The potentially vibrant civil societies of South Asia need to overcome apathy and become active contributors and agents of change, thus challenging the strategies of power enrichment, raising their voice against social injustice and structural violence. The civil society will also have to demand a role in decision-making, as it is the most important stakeholder in the process. It has to define the limits of the state. In most of the developing world and the former Eastern bloc, the state has developed at the expense of vital civil institutions and this has only added to ideological divisions and ethnic turmoil. There is an urgent requirement to dismantle or dilute the existing class structure and reconstitute political power of relations, which are inclusive in nature and do not leave political space for the dispossessed to form a alliances

⁶⁵ Iftikhar H. Malik, *op.cit.*, pp.95-112. In India was implemented Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO). POTO is a security law that empowers the state to torture and detain political opponents, revoke civil liberties, and suppress actions it deems threatening to the nation.

⁶⁶ The westernized upper middle classes in urban India who assumed the control over the state authority after independence. Also the fact that Congress was in power in India for 45 years.

of resistance. This is only possible within the framework of a liberal representative democracy.

The emphasis given by the forces of authority to centralization and monopolistic policies which lack legitimacy and consensus will then be challenged. A renewed discourse on the major issues of civil rights, academic freedom, a free press, an independent judiciary, deconstruction of elitist, discrete oligarchies, supremacy of the development sector in the national economy, tolerance for ideological and ethnic pluralism, and the availability of multiple channels of accountability will further bring unilateral role of the state under severe scrutiny.⁶⁷

However the fracturing of civil society by the elite is also a South Asian reality, which is done by forging alliances within civil society. These alliances are more pronounced in undemocratic state systems than in the democratic ones. The functioning of civil society in India is far more vibrant than in Pakistan. Yet another dimension of this phenomenon is the character of the elite; where the elite are monopolistic than civil society is a part of those elite or is a beneficiary. However, when the elite are competitive, civil society reverts to its original role of an overseer.

The civil society construct of South Asia is also such that the general assumption is that it cannot prosper without government's benefaction. This is partly so because the middle class, the most important constituent of civil society flourished through state patronage, be it through employment opportunities in the public sector, or through industrial units established in the sector, then handed over to private entrepreneurs. The setting up of private industry, which the state protected against competition, also benefited them. This resulted in the state controlling all economic activity and became the most formidable constraint to the expansion of private economic activity. In transitional societies like South Asia, it carries far more relevance. In an ideal state-society equation, the state does not intervene in the process of economic affairs and human actions. It only creates order within which this process can develop. This requires discipline and self restraint on the part of the state. The objective is to have a clear distinction between state and society and then seek a rule-led-open process. In fact, a civil society cannot exist if this is not the case because civil society requires a state to guarantee the rule of law and the regulation of social behavior,⁶⁸ but at

⁶⁷ Iftikhar H. Malik, *op.cit.*, pp.5-6.

⁶⁸ Mary Kaldor, 'Transnational civil society' in Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler (eds.), *Human Rights In Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.196.

the same time the re-emergence of the concept of civil society was a reaction to state barbarity.⁶⁹ In South Asian society and in many third world societies, what is lacking is the civil society of conscious, literate and politically active people, who are not dependent upon political patronage.⁷⁰ Whereas the crises of bad governance and soft state as explained earlier are related themes. The state is conceived ideally as an arbiter which society has created to resolve recurring disputes among members according to accepted universal rules and procedures.⁷¹ Implicit in the consensus standpoint is the presumption that state and society in the West have developed symmetrically, in symbiosis with each other, and that improving the stability of this equilibrium through necessary change and self-adjustment is self-evident. This, however, is not applicable to South Asia.

More human casualties are suffered in South Asia because of the prevailing structural violence in the region which constitutes the generally deplorable conditions in the region due to disease, malnutrition, illiteracy and unemployment, than the direct violence of war. The institutions of governance are directly responsible for this chaos. There is a need for radical reform. One of the major problems is the unwillingness to put obvious answers to practice. The solution lies in restoring the sovereignty of the citizen. Most institutions of state and society have shown little desire to cope with many of the most obvious and serious sources of insecurity and have shown themselves to be inconsistent and indecisive in addressing problems. The redefined state or the model state should be ready to shed those functions which it need not perform. The national security is considered synonymous with the survival of a regime or preserving particular elite interest as a consequence of which the institutions of the state and society have shown no inclination to rethink and reevaluate the exiting concept of security. A major impediment is the tussle between the forces of status quo and those of change.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.197.

⁷⁰ Meghnad Desai, *op.cit.*, p.295.

⁷¹ Q. Skinner, *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought*, Vols. 1 & 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).