

3. The dimensions of conflicts per region

3.1 South Asia

3.1.1 The political and military dimension

State-formation and pluralism

Many of the conflicts in South Asia can, one way or another, be related to the fundamental issue of creating or sustaining states in plural ethnic, religious or cultural societies. India, e.g., contains many ethnic and religious groups spread over various states. Bringing and keeping these groups together in what could best be described as a sub-continent was already an ambitious design under British colonial rule. The decision to divide the former colony in two separate states based on religion indicated the scale of the problems that had to be solved. For India nor for Pakistan the problems have been solved by the Partition. India still faces internal problems in Punjab where a separatist insurgency of Sikh militants took place, and in the northeast. Groups in Ghorkaland, Assam and Nagaland aimed for autonomy or secession. In the case of Kashmir, secessionist tensions exist, with an additional interstate dimension to the problem. At the all-India level Hindu chauvinism has resulted in a greater divide between Hindus and Muslims, and communal violence between the two groups.

Pakistan also faced severe problems with regard to state formation and the integration of groups in society. The Baluch, the Sindhis and the *mohajirs* have voiced protests about maltreatment by the federal government and unequal access to political power and economic resources. On the other hand, the chauvinism of the Punjab is growing since this group makes up around 60% of the total population. The politics of centralization and the attempt to make Pakistan a unitary state and a homeland for the Muslims on the sub-continent have failed. In this regard, the case of Pakistan indicates that the process of state-formation needs to be based on a clear concept of state. From the beginning, the conception underlying the independent state of Pakistan lacked clear direction, resting on the one hand on the concept of a secularized, parliamentary democracy, while on the other hand it should be a Muslim nation. These concepts were regularly conflicting. Moreover, the idea of "a Muslim nation" is not self-evident as can be concluded from the conflicts between Sunni and Shiites and more generally from the debate regarding the influence of the Islam on the government and the legislation of the country.

The importance of dealing with the problems of plural societies in newly independent states can also be seen in the case of Bangladesh, the youngest state in the region. The problems with its plural society stem from the colonial period but have remained an obstacle during the process of state-formation. On the one hand, the clashes between the tribal Buddhist Chakmas and the ethnic Bengalis of Bangladesh in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are a result the progressive penetration of the Bengali state, which tries to colonize and exploit this area. These policies have been accompanied by a deliberate policy by the former Pakistani and the present Bangladeshi government to encourage ethnic Bengalis to settle in this region. On the other hand it has to do with the Chakmas trying to protect their tribal rights against the encroachment of the Bangladeshi state and the Bengali population. Bangladesh has a substantial Hindu minority and the relationship between Hindus and Muslims might easily become affected by problems in neighboring India. In case communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in India escalates, this will have violent repercussions for both sections of society in Bangladesh as well.

Sri Lanka is the fourth country facing problems as a result of its plural society. Here the war between the Sri Lankan state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who are fighting for an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the island, has kept the country firmly in its grasp since the beginning of the 1980s. The problems between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority date back to the end of the 1950s and are related to the decisions regarding language policy. The Sri Lankan government also started to favor the Sinhalese majority in education, government-related jobs, and other politics. This was in response to the traditionally privileged position of the Tamil minority under the British, but yet was perceived as discriminating, especially in a situation of dwindling public employment opportunities. This conflict gradually developed into a struggle for secession, as now fought by the LTTE. In addition to this conflict, the Sri Lankan state has also been confronted with Sinhalese extremists of the JVP who have attempted to overthrow the existing political order two times.

Afghanistan also has problems with integrating the various tribes and ethnic groups within its borders. This country can best be characterized as a failed state. The state failure of Afghanistan has its roots in the country's history: the process of state-formation never succeeded. Various Afghan rulers had to accept the strong and independent position of the (regional) tribes (Pashtuns, Hazarans, Tajiks and Uzbeks) and their leaders. The Soviet invasion has not altered this situation, nor did the Taliban, mainly Pashtun seem capable of achieving a fundamental change. Their attempt to turn Afghanistan in a Sunni Muslim state is not accepted by the other groups in society and leads to an increasing breakdown of order, including the old tribal structure.

These problems are not just a heritage of the colonial period. The governments of the newly independent states were and are accountable for many of the processes that developed into conflicts. They failed to deal with the issue of community and identity and pursued dangerous discriminatory communal and identity policies leaving particular groups outside the political community of the state. This resulted in political exclusion, socioeconomic marginalization and finally communal conflict. Hence, states can only deal effectively with these issues if they have succeeded in at least reaching a sufficient level of institutional capacity.

Institutional capacity and democratization

Institutional capacity first includes the ability to command loyalty, and the right to rule. Second, to maintain one of the most essential elements of sovereignty i.e. the monopoly over the legitimate use of force within defined territorial limits. Third, to operate within the context of a consensus-based political community. Fourth, the ability to extract the resources necessary to rule and provide services. If we were to develop a model based on these abilities with on the one side strong states, and on the opposite side weak states, Afghanistan would certainly fit in the last category. The other states of South Asia vary in position. Bangladesh's position is on the weak-state side, but it cannot be characterized as a failed state. Pakistan too may be characterized as a weak state, though it also has a rather centralized government and powerful army. On the aspects of loyalty and consensus, as well as service delivery, its performance is weak. India and Sri Lanka are paradoxical and puzzling states. They are relatively well-functioning and old democracies, but at the same time they are facing large-scale internal conflicts and problems in governance.

As regards democracy and the process of democratization, the 'bargain' between the state and the political community boils down to the following trade-off: the state has the right to extract, but must also provide services and allow participation in decisions (share power) to allocate resources. The countries in the region can be characterized in the following way. In

Afghanistan the process of democratization has never had a chance and where, at the moment, the Pastu dominated Taliban movement aims for power in the Center by trying to crush the other ethnic movements militarily and to bring the country under their rule. Bangladesh was ruled by a military-bureaucratic oligarchy until the beginning of the 1990s. As of the 1990s Bangladesh is democratizing cautiously. In Pakistan, democratic policies have always been around, but never had a real breakthrough. The armed forces have from the beginning turned the government into a military-bureaucratic undertaking, co-opting civilians only when necessary. The experiences with democratic governments have furthermore not always been most encouraging. The example of Sri Lanka indicates that a democratic system is not sufficient for preventing conflict. The oldest democracy in the region is confronted with the a serious internal conflict. India shows that it is possible to successfully introduce a democratic system in a plural society. The problem of democratic India, however, is to sustain the open character of the political system and not to embark upon exclusionary politics.

How can the state's institutional capacity and democratization process be related to the ongoing conflicts? The instrumental capacity of statehood, which refers to the machinery of government (meaning laws, norms, and incumbents of official office), is certainly important. The following picture emerges in South Asia. Afghanistan has failed to develop a machinery of government that functions effectively. Every attempt to modernize or to increase the institutional capacity of the state through expanding the state's control invoked strong resistance, often taking the shape of violent rebellion. The government remained a parallel structure next to the tribal one. The political rules of the game for the Center were simply to accept the autonomy of the tribal structure. When the Center does not do so, the state immediately loses its support and legitimacy and is no longer able to function as a guarantor of security, can no longer function effectively, and finally loses its sovereign authority. Afghanistan at present is a typical example of a failed state, lacking well-functioning central institutions and even the idea of the state.

Another case in point is Bangladesh. Its weakness cannot solely be attributed to its recent independence. This ideally should have resulted in greater ideological consensus among the population on the idea and concept of the state. Even though nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism were adopted in the Constitution, the state has not been able to live up to any of these principles. In the political center of the country a one-party presidential system evolved with a pivotal role for the military. The state and its leaders lacked any form of legitimacy. This was partly a result of the gap between the elite and the mass and the lack of a democratic political culture. Aside from these problems at the political center, Bangladesh was also confronted with other severe problems. First the problem of integrating the Chittagong Hill Tracts tribes, the Chakmas, and dealing effectively with their tribal rights in order to thwart this group's bid for independence. For a long time the Bangladeshi government was unable to deal effectively (neither militarily, nor politically) with violent resistance until recently a truce and peace accord was signed. Another aspect of Bangladesh concerns the Center's inability to effectively control all of its territory. Especially in the south and southwest of Bangladesh criminal and guerrilla groups act as 'extortion-lords' and control complete areas without any interference of the authorities. The government is not able to extract the resources necessary to rule and provide services to its population. It depends heavily on external aid. All this indicates that Bangladesh still has a long way to go. The democratization process looks promising since the beginning of the 1990s, but is still vulnerable due to politics of violence and agitation. The problem for Bangladesh is now to replace this political violence (e.g. campus-violence) by political debate.

Whereas Afghanistan and Bangladesh can be seen as states with weaknesses on all points (state power, legitimacy and capacity), Pakistan at least has been able to develop some instrumental capacities. These developments, however, were mainly in the field of instrumental capacities for the armed forces. Its recent nuclear status notwithstanding, Pakistan is facing grave and structural internal problems that have to do with the lack of institutional capacity and legitimacy of the Center. In this regard we have already touched upon the failure to integrate the various groups in society. After the *mohajir* the Punjabi come to dominate politics in post-Independence Pakistan. This group has gradually moved to the center of politics, to the detriment of other minority ethnic groups in Pakistan and clearly to the Bengali who even represented a numerical majority. The most obvious effect of all these deficiencies was the breakup of the state in 1971 with the independence of Bangladesh. After 1971, there were many other problems with groups in society. Of all the conflicts with autonomy and separatist movements, two conflicts stand out. First the conflicts in Sindh between the Sindhi and the *mohajirs* and other minority groups whose influx gradually turns the Sindhis into a minority in their own province. Second, the gradual process of Islamization that appears to turn Pakistan into a Sunni state, thus excluding Shiites. At the center of these problems and conflicts, however, is not the plural character of the country as such, but the failure of the Center to develop a power sharing arrangement that does not exclude groups within society. The simple introduction of democratic policies offers no solution, as the 1970-elections show, after which ethnic identities became politicized. This implies that Pakistan still needs to develop a viable concept for the country and an open and genuine democratic polity in which all groups are fairly represented. Also the armed forces should be brought under civilian control

Sri Lanka and India appear to be the strongest states in the region, even though they too have to deal with serious problems. Independent Sri Lanka, then still Ceylon, started off as a highly centralized state with a democratic political system and a modern party-system. These basics are still in place, as we can conclude from the conflicts, but they do not seem to have functioned very well. First the centralized state proved to be a mixed blessing. On the one hand instrumental capacity was very high. On the other hand, it implied that after independence centralization made the state assume the characteristics of the majority population group: Sri Lanka gradually became a mainly Sinhalese Buddhist state. In view of the fact that a large majority indeed is Sinhalese and Buddhist, this development should not necessarily be problematic as long as the rights of minorities are guaranteed. The traditional policy to bring all groups together at the central level without any meaningful devolution of power, however, proved to be counterproductive in the long run, notwithstanding legal provisions guaranteeing equal opportunities regarding policy-making and resource allocation. The gradual Sinhalization of politics (perceived as well as factual) at the cost of the island's minorities, and the absence of a process of gradual devolution of power resulted in a conflict with the island's main minority group, the Tamils. This conflict took a violent turn through the war between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE. The intra-Tamil group dynamic also contributed to escalation of the conflict and the level of violence that at present characterizes it. It does, however, indicate that in countries where a large majority of the population belongs to one ethnic group the potential for polarization increases. In such cases even a democratic system might not have sufficient safeguards when there is no political will, nor the necessity for mediating coalitions. Bolstering the dominant sector of society might in such cases not strengthen but undermine the legitimacy of the state. The government consequently has a pivotal task in dealing with these problems, as the decision on the Language Act clearly demonstrates.

As regards Sri Lanka it should, however, be mentioned that this country has proven able to maintain its democratic system as well as civilian control of the military. Its success in doing so is remarkable since the country is already for a long time confronting violent internal conflict. It is even more remarkable if one takes into account that the state withstood two attempts by an extremist Sinhalese group to overthrow government, and had to deal with the existence of a de facto almost independent Tamil state in the northern peninsula of Jaffna. In both cases, the Sri Lankan state proved able to reverse developments, although a complete success has not yet been attained. These conflicts, challenges and deficiencies of the democratic system notwithstanding, it can be said that Sri Lanka is still a relatively strong state. However, in order to solve the present conflicts and to prevent new conflicts, additional provisions have to be made with regard to minorities, including the devolution of central power as already partially executed or proposed, though not yet accepted as sufficient to solve the current problems.

India potentially contains all problems and conflicts of the other countries in the region. The fact that India still exists as a single political territorial unit, therefore, is a remarkable accomplishment. The basis for this success can be found in the struggle for independence and the special role of the Congress Party. During the first years of independence, almost all ethnic and religious groups, castes and classes were represented in the Congress Party. Congress not only dominated the federal Center, but also the states. The Center's attempt at social engineering through the 'Three Language Formula' was important. Since language proved to be a main factor in the cultural identity of the various ethnic groups in society, regional languages had to be taken into account. Yet another basis for India's success was the secular character of the Constitution. This was essential in a country where a large majority is Hindu, and where the differences between Hindus and Muslims in the past had resulted in a partition of the former colony. The rise of Hindu chauvinism, however, has resulted in the growth of Hindu-nationalist parties, and in a gradual decline of the secular character of the Congress Party. The basic features of India as a democratic and secular polity are nevertheless still intact. In India there are several cases of violent insurgency. Most of them (Bihar, Ghorkaland, Bodo, Assam and Nagaland) are of 'minor' importance when related to their effects on the Center. Punjab is a problem on a different level and has certainly challenged the Center. Despite continuing grievances, the population at present does not seem to be embarking on a new wave of violent insurgency. The only real test case for India is Kashmir. This conflict has internal as well as international dimensions. On the international level India's relationship with Pakistan is at stake. On the internal level, secession of Kashmir may set a precedent for other states and provinces challenging the Center. This explains India's strong reaction to Kashmiri violence.

Conclusions

Besides issues that are a consequence of colonialism, the behavior of governments in the period since independence has also contributed to the problems of the South Asian countries. Governments that were initially conceived as secular and non-partisan mediators between the various sectors and groups of society have been favoring certain sectors of society and excluding or even repressing other ethnic, religious or political groups. In some cases religion has been a factor in this process. India and Pakistan, by covertly or openly favoring certain sects or religions, have promoted sectarian or communal violence. Religion also plays a role in Afghanistan's conflicts, although this country is torn apart by conflicts about various issues. In other cases the politicization of ethnic identities, often as a result of discriminating policies at the national level, has caused severe conflicts. The conflict between Tamils and

Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, the conflict with the Sikhs in the Indian Punjab (as well as various others in the North and Northeast), the conflict with the Chakmas in Bangladesh, and various conflicts in Pakistan are cases in point. The most extreme example is still the secession of East Bengal. Exclusion and a failing political system without fair and equal access to decision-making in the Center thus create a potential for mobilization among excluded groups, as well as for violent opposition.

Both authoritarian and democratic states face internal conflict. Military regimes often came into being because civilian regimes failed to deal effectively with the problems of the country. Yet, they have been equally incapable of competently dealing with them. However, democracy and the process of democratization do not guarantee the absence or prevention of violent conflict either. For both regime-types the aspects of consensus, authority, loyalty and consent are important for regime legitimacy. Based on the cases in South Asia it can be concluded that a legitimacy deficit can result in violent conflict. The case of Sri Lanka e.g. indicates that democratization does not suffice in cases where large majorities (be they ethnic, religious or linguistic) have to share power with minorities when there is only a limited potential or preparedness for mediating coalitions. Under such circumstances a democratic order does not yet imply equal access to resources and equal opportunities to participate effectively in politics. For the prevention of conflicts in the future the way democratic governments guarantee the rights and opportunities of minority groups is thus highly significant. Otherwise democracies will become exclusionary democracies. This especially applies to Pakistan (religion as well as ethnicity), India (religion) and Sri Lanka (ethnicity) where minorities may otherwise have no other option than the 'legitimization' of violent opposition in the absence of other means for voicing discontent.

3.1.2 The socioeconomic dimension

Structural factors

In South Asia a number of characteristics needs to be highlighted before making an analysis of socioeconomic causes of conflict. The main features of the state system in this region are directly derived from the British colonial empire. After the partition of India and the independence of Bangladesh the current situation came into being. As a result of animosity between the two major states, India and Pakistan, the economic infrastructure inherited from the British was split in two separate parts. This infrastructural disjunction of the individual economies has limited the economic capacities of the states in the region. Consequently, the economies of the North Eastern states of India suffered badly. Moreover the discrepancy in size, population and economic capacity between India and its neighbors is enormous. This fact has strongly influenced the character of bilateral relations. India's strategic position weighs heavily on the other states and has made prospects for collaboration on an equal footing unlikely. India and Indian political leaders have adopted similar attitudes to surrounding states as the British before them. This has aroused strong feelings of distrust among smaller neighbors, reinforced by the silent annexation of Sikkim in 1974. In very broad terms one might describe the major economic developments since independence as a combination of agricultural innovation and rationalization (Green Revolution) and industrialization. In the last twenty years notably India has greatly diversified its economy resulting in unprecedented growth of the information and service industries. However, in terms of diminishing socioeconomic inequality between population groups none of the states in South Asia has performed well. Instead, inequality even seems to have increased over the last decades. With regard to the provision of social services the record of states in the region

varies considerably. In this respect Sri Lanka stands out as the best performing state, consistently earmarking a substantial part of government spending for education, health and other public purposes. For India, Pakistan and Bangladesh the state has only marginally been able to honor its commitment towards the population at large as can be inferred from the low levels of government spending. For Afghanistan the available statistics suggest a virtual standstill of government involvement in these public sectors.

Poverty, inequality, state policies and dynamics of differentiation

All data on standard of living, demography, public health and education point to a general long-term decline of poverty. In-depth studies suggest a fluctuating trend at the local level with up and downward movements. A quantitative analysis of available data shows there is no relationship between poverty and violent conflict. In fact, many conflict cases demonstrate the opposite trend (Punjab, Nagaland and Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Tamil-Sinhala cases). In these areas higher-than-average incomes are recorded. Secondly, the most militant layers of a specific group are usually not the most destitute. Thus the *mohajir* movement feeds strongly on middle class elements fearing loss of jobs. The militant Akali Dal Sikh movement also largely comprises middle class Sikhs. Similar observations have been made with regard to the LTTE movement in Sri Lanka and the Nagaland militant movements. In the latter case members of the affluent Chakhesang tribe predominate in the ranks of the liberation movement. Indirectly, economic recession or socioeconomic change affecting already destitute groups, may provide mobilizing incentives for extremist movements. Some of the inter-communal riots in the urban setting of India and Pakistan provide an example of this. In the rural setting Marxist oriented peasant uprisings have proliferated, notably in India. The on-going marginalization of land-less peasants provided the basis for ideological movements fighting against the structural inequality underlying the agricultural system.

With regard to the analysis of inequality we may distinguish interregional inequality, inter-class and inter-group inequality. On the interregional level one might conclude that the cases of Pakistan and India stand out against the other countries in our research sample. In India, regional inequality has increased, despite professed efforts to reverse this trend. Arguments related to cost recovery or economy of scale have led to neglect of these areas. When such areas are inhabited by specific ethno-linguistic communities selective neglect by the central state becomes a powerful mobilizing factor. In Pakistan such a division can be observed between the Punjab and some urban core areas (Lahore and Karachi) and the rest of the country. The unequal treatment of the former eastern wing of pre-1971 Pakistan ultimately led to the independence struggle of the Bengal people. In Sri Lanka, there has been a consistent trend of diminishing interregional differences. If we focus on inequality between social strata in the various states we automatically encounter the caste system as a basic feature. In India caste-based violence has a long history but cannot be defined as a large-scale violent conflict such as understood in our study. Yet, endemic caste-based poverty provided incentives for peasant revolts such as the Naxalbari. The JVP uprisings may be considered a conflict of poor versus rich, but close analysis reveals the role of other factors, such as caste and education.

Finally, changing socioeconomic positions between groups figure prominently as mobilizing factors for conflict. As the Punjab case highlights, the government policy of redistributing resources through government pricing policies had drawbacks for specific groups in that region. In the *mohajir* case the relative deterioration in position is quite obvious. The struggle between indigenous peoples and migrant communities in the northeastern states of India as well as in the Chittagong Hills Tracts provides other examples. Simultaneously, the inter-communal riots between Muslims and Hindus where Muslims constitute a significant

minority, as well as the rivalry between Tamils and Sinhalese over access to jobs and educational facilities, can also be classified on this dimension. A precise temporal co-variance between growing inequality and the outbreak of violent conflict can hardly be established. The Punjab case shows, however, how socioeconomic changes impacted positively on some segments of local society while marginalizing others. The Chittagong Hills Tracts provide another example where the implementation of particular government policies can be related to specific, and sometimes violent, reactions by segments of the affected population.

The economic performance of the countries under investigation has fluctuated enormously during the post-independence period. For India the problem of scale requires the analysis of the performance of individual states. States as the Punjab and Haryana have recorded some of the highest growth rates over a period of some twenty years. Other affluent states (West Bengal and Gujarat) have recorded low levels of growth. Among the backward states some experienced rapid growth (Orissa, Manipur) while others remained stagnant (Bihar, Assam and Madhya Pradesh). Despite the overall lack of co-variance between growth statistics and the upsurge of violent conflicts, some trends can be observed for India. In the four states that have recorded the lowest average growth rates widespread unrest emerged in rural areas. In Bangladesh growth patterns have been highly unstable. In Dhaka and the CHT area negative growth was recorded in the early 1980s followed by moderate economic growth. In Sri Lanka, a stagnant economy in combination with frustrated, well-educated and upward mobile youths eventually provided the rallying ground for the JVP movement. In Pakistan regional patterns of economic inequality have led to the outburst of violent conflict. In Baluchistan grievances towards the central government thrived on lack of investment and economic progress in the region.

The repression of distinct socio-cultural characteristics stands out as a salient cause of conflict. In Afghanistan the ongoing fight between the Pashtu Taliban movement and the other ethnic groups on the future structure of the Afghan state clearly evolves around the question of cultural autonomy. The Pashtu majority has dominated the Afghan State, but currently faces strong pressure to acknowledge minority rights. In the Punjab, the demands voiced by the Akali Dal movement reflect the aspirations of the Sikh community towards a separate cultural identity within a proper territory. The central Indian state perceives this nationalistic movement as an outright threat to its own survival as a unitary state, as is the case with the nationalistic movements in the northeastern states.

In Bangladesh the Pahadee community has been able to resist Bengali incursions and repression despite their small numbers. They perceive their struggle in terms of safeguarding their culture. In Sri Lanka the imposition of discriminatory laws against the Tamil language has triggered the conflict with the Sinhalese majority. Language disputes have a strong mobilizing capacity in the region. The *mohajir* community stands out as clear example of an identity that was molded as a result of changes in government policies affecting their privileged position.

Religion adds yet another dimension to the problems surrounding identity of specific groups, as shown by the ancient antagonism between the Hindus and Muslims on the sub-continent, the partition between India and Pakistan and the conflict about Kashmir. In the Punjab the conflict evolves around language and religion, which are reinforcing each other as rallying points for the Sikh radical movement. The overlap between religion, language and ethnic identities provides an even more powerful background for identity politics as shown in northeastern India and the Chittagong Hill Tracts. When the identity factor works in

combination with socioeconomic factors related to livelihood activities, resource exploitation and inequality between groups, the effect is still stronger. Inequality in income and economic opportunity features prominently among the grievances forwarded by those engaged in the conflicts. Apart from Afghanistan, the other countries have experienced violent conflicts in which groups have been motivated by differences, real or perceived, between themselves and other groups. In this respect two distinct levels can be distinguished, namely problems related to inter-group inequality within distinct sub-regions between indigenous peoples and migrant communities, and selective treatment of specific groups by the central state.

As the relationship between states and specific sub state groups is concerned two broad tendencies can be discerned in the case of South Asia. Firstly, states seek to exploit areas that are either relatively peripheral and under- exploited or well endowed with resources, and producing surplus. Such policies almost inevitably encounter resistance from groups inhabiting such areas where local resources are siphoned off without adequate compensation. Moreover, in multi-ethnic states such selective exploitation usually interferes with specific livelihood strategies of distinct ethno-linguistic communities residing in those areas, and consequently effects the cultural survival of such groups. The Northeastern states of India and the CHT area in Bangladesh provide adequate examples. Sometimes governments have tried to undercut the extremist movements by deliberately promoting positive action for the indigenous population groups. Thus the consecutive military governments of East Pakistan which later became independent Bangladesh, initiated programs for affirmative action towards the indigenous Pahadee tribes in order to promote cultural activities and to improve education for these groups. The effects of such policies remain uncertain as part of such communities will benefit while others will interpret such initiatives as moves to destroy local culture and resistance.

Secondly, states engage in resource distribution through regional budget allocation and the provision of social services to the population. Such policies have a differential impact on constituent communities. In general, the allocation of government jobs as well as access to specific facilities such as higher education have a disproportionate impact on inter-group competition in the face of overall scarcity and lack of public investment. In India competition for state sector jobs has generated violence between various communities, involving class, caste and religious cleavages.

Conclusions

Despite the long-term decline of poverty, the South Asian region has experienced several serious intrastate conflicts. Moreover, these conflicts often concerned better-off regions or groups. This suggests that poverty as such is not a sufficient condition for conflict. However, in combination with variables like inequality, and a stagnating or declining growth poverty can still be of importance.

As regards socioeconomic inequality, links can be established with conflict, especially when interregional or inter-group aspects are involved. On both levels inequality provided incentives for mobilizing groups. These incentives became stronger when redistributionary governmental policies were involved that resulted in marginalization of specific groups or regions. When the group and regional levels coincide, the effect becomes still stronger. Conflict seems unavoidable when discriminatory government policies and economic marginalization coincide with cultural discrimination.

Economic growth is another factor that suggests a link with conflict. India's areas with the lowest growth rates have recorded widespread unrest. In Sri Lanka, a stagnant economy in combination with rising expectations provided a rallying ground for a revolutionary movement.

3.1.3 The external dimension

Military aspects

Throughout contemporary South Asian history political tensions have emerged between the core-state India and its neighbors. There are many unresolved border disputes in the sub-region. The Chinese-Indian border dispute in the Himalayas and the Durand line dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan stem from the Colonial era. The Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan, the Chittagong Hill Tracts insurgency in Bangladesh and the secessionist confrontations in the northeastern Indian states all result from the Partition. The geopolitical position of South Asia has made it a prime target for major political powers in the recent past, culminating in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and United States support for the *mujahideen*. This event has had a tremendous impact on regional security. The external interference by India in the affairs of neighboring Sri Lanka is a post-Partition issue.

Furthermore, the Cold War had its regional proxy confrontation between India and Pakistan, whereby the former sided with the Soviet Union and the latter with the United States. However, the proximity of the Peoples Republic of China and its invasion of Tibet (1950) added a different dimension to Cold War rivalry. The ongoing power struggle between India and Pakistan, however, is the single most important security issue in the sub-region, followed by the sensitive relationship between India and China. Russia, as the successor-state of the Soviet Union, continues to exert considerable political influence in the former Central Asian Soviet Republics and in Afghanistan. The United States continues to support Pakistan but currently has a more indirect role in the region.

Turning to the border disputes, the Chinese-Indian dispute over the exact demarcation of the Himalayan boundaries led to a short war in 1962, during which the Chinese inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Indian troops and occupied large tracks of land in the Ladakh province. The British had profited in 1911 from internal turmoil in China to establish the so-called McMahon line. From the point of view of the Communist regime this represented an unequal treaty imposed by the British which had no legitimacy. Although Nehru entertained cordial relations with China the dispute over the border issue degraded into war. After the 1988 visit of Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing the lines of control have been more or less accepted as *de facto* borders between both countries. However with regard to the borders of Kashmir, and especially the borders of Pakistan controlled Kashmir, controversy remains. India does not recognize the treaty between Pakistan and China over this issue as it does not recognize Pakistani sovereignty over that part of Kashmir.

From the early days of British incursion in the sub-continent the Pashtun dominated kingdom of Afghanistan has been a battle ground for the Tsarist Empire and the British Empire. It took the British quite a long period and two wars before they subdued the Pashtuns and imposed upon them a treaty that relegated foreign affairs to the British. The Durand line issue has ever since remained a bone of contention between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan's aspiration to have an outlet to the sea prompted its claim to defend the rights of self-determination to the Pathans and Baluchis residing on the other side of the Durand line. At

various times the Pathan dominated governments in Kabul threatened to annex the Pathan area of Pakistan. For the Afghan government this issue served several purposes. First, it diverted attention from the struggle for equal rights and better living conditions of the people and particularly of oppressed national minorities inside Afghanistan. Second, it served to rally the Afghan people behind the government policies and third, the government was often able to use it to detain, jail and execute individuals identified with the opposition, by branding them Pakistani agents. In a bid to preserve a balance of power with Pakistan on the frontiers of Central Asia the Afghan government under Premier Mohammad Daoud requested military assistance from the US. The US, however, supported its ally Pakistan and US military assistance to Pakistan increased. Pakistan was, after all, an important member of the US sponsored South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and later a partner in the Baghdad Pact. Daoud finally requested the Soviet Union to provide military assistance to Afghanistan; at the same time all US development projects in Afghanistan were terminated and turned over to Soviet bloc countries. For over a decade, throughout Daoud's period as a Prime Minister (1953-63), the Soviet-Afghan association had such a powerful adverse effect on Pakistan's internal politics and border policies that both Pakistan and Afghanistan began mobilizing their armed forces across the Durand Line. The current stalemate between the Taliban and the northern coalition continues to have a destabilizing effect on the entire region. The current failure to restructure the state has resulted in the creation of an 'anarchic opportunity space', in which a so-called war economy flourishes, allowing for the trafficking of drugs and small arms, as well as the training and harboring of terrorist groups. This in turn strongly impacts upon other regional conflicts such as the Kashmir and Punjab cases in India as well as upon the internal security of Pakistan.

The Kashmir issue is much more than a simple border dispute between two independent states. The heart of the matter lies in the manner in which this princely state was given to India. The fact that a Hindu ruler relegated sovereignty to India violated one of the Partition principles, as the Muslim majority of Jammu-Kashmir was refused the option to accede to newly independent Pakistan. This led to the first military confrontation between both states in 1947 during which roughly a third of the territory came under Pakistani control. Since then two major wars have been waged, respectively in 1965 and in 1971. The 1965 war did not alter the status quo and in 1971 Pakistan was split; East Pakistan became independent Bangladesh with crucial backing from India. Since the Simla Accord of 1972 the Kashmir issue has been 'frozen' for a decade, mainly to the advantage of India. Recently however, Muslim nationalists have re-ignited the violent conflict through a series of guerrilla attacks on military and civilian targets in Kashmir itself. The growing radicalization among the Sikhs in the Punjab has given an impetus to a Kashmiri independence movement that seeks to liberate Kashmir both from Indian and Pakistani influence. Diaspora Kashmir groups succeeded in internationalizing the issue to India's disadvantage. Moreover, Kashmir again became a useful rallying call, to divert attention from failures in domestic social and economic policies in both India and Pakistan. Currently the issue has become more intractable than ever, with three parties contending for ultimate political control of Kashmir. For India the issue of Kashmir is directly related to the secular nature and unity of the Indian State, as there are more states within the Indian Union with specific ethnic-linguistic or religious majorities. Secession of Kashmir from the Union would provide a dangerous precedent. For Pakistan the question of Kashmir refers to the unjust application of the rules that guided the Partition and the neglect of relevant UN resolutions. Finally for the Kashmir Nationalists the crucial issue has become independence from both India and Pakistan.

To a certain extent the international ramifications of the CHT conflict and some of the insurgency conflicts in northeastern India overlap. In the aftermath of the partition these