The Nation-State Problematic in Asia: The South Asian Experience

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Abstract

If nations and nationalism are products of industrialisation and modernity, then South Asia is not supposed to have the concept of nationalism since the region neither has experienced industrialisation nor has it undergone the transformation of modernity. The history of nation building in South Asia is a story of adaptation to alien values by the prudent manipulation of political elites. In the name of modernisation, South Asians were asked to relinquish their traditional values and opt for values that were purely western and projected as rational, and the only way to a better socio-political future. In the process, for political expediency, the colonial masters dissected the composite society into compartments, thus unwittingly preparing the grounds for debasing the concept of a composite nationhood that was endogenous to the Indian subcontinent. However, in the end the South Asian subcontinent was divided on religious grounds. The two infant nations set out to build nation-states that would be viable as modern states and united as nations. Both nations are still struggling to build their desired nation-states, and the primary threat has come from the question of "ethnicity" that has been haunting them both. The problems India and Pakistan face along with the other South Asian nations are: a multiplicity of nationalities; the overlapping geographical boundaries among nationalities; and the failure to articulate a common nationality.

Key Words

South Asia, India, Pakistan, nationalism.

Introduction

If nations and nationalism are products of industrialisation and modernity, then South Asia is not supposed to have the concept of nationalism since the region neither has experienced industrialisation nor has it undergone the transformation of modernity. The region is atypical in a sense that there seems to be an acceptance of both modern and traditional values and institutions. Both modern and traditional value systems and institutional forms coexist side by side, though not always in harmony. Historically, political systems in South Asia have always been territorial states without any reference to nationalities and nationalism. The concepts of nation

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and nationalism are of recent origin to the region, and like every other concept are heavily loaded with modern/western characteristics. In the absence of suitable socio-economic base, the western/ modern political concepts have created a conflict that seems unending now.

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The history of nation building in South Asia is a story of adaptation to alien values by the prudent manipulation of political elites. In the name of modernisation, South Asians were asked to relinquish their traditional values and opt for values that were purely western and projected as rational, and the only way to a better socio-political future. In the process, for political expediency, the colonial masters dissected the composite society into compartments, thus unwittingly preparing the grounds for debasing the concept of a composite nationhood that was endogenous to the Indian subcontinent.[1] The dissection began as early as 1822 with the idea of divide and rule adopted by the colonial masters. In a systematic manner the British managed to move nationalist feelings onto religious lines in the subcontinent. The landmarks of this endeavour include the partition of Bengal in 1905, the introduction of communal suffrage in 1909, the introduction of separate electorates in 1919, and the final act of partition of the subcontinent on religious lines in 1947. The partition of the subcontinent failed to create viable homogenous nation-states, and instead created permanent fissures that have the potential to put the subcontinent on the path of fission. It is important here to note that there was resistance to the introduction of the idea of a modern nation-state in the subcontinent, and this resistance was from within the two major religious communities of the subcontinent, i.e. Hindus and Muslims. Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal, the two leading poets and philosophers of late colonial India, criticised the introduction of the notion of the modern nation-state as the root cause for conflict in the subcontinent, and opposed the concept of homogenous nationalism as they were rightly apprehensive of its suitability for the socio-political consciousness of the people of South Asia. While Tagore, having seen the perilous effects of nationalism in other parts of the world, denounced nationalism as a destructive force, one having the potential to destroy the Indian civilisation, Iqbal blamed

the western notion of nationalism for creating modern conflict in the Indian subcontinent by making religion relative rather than universal, and by making religion territorially specific and unsuited to the temperament of other nations.

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However, in the end the South Asian subcontinent was divided on religious grounds. The two infant nations set out to build nation-states that would be viable as modern states and united as nations. The attempt was desperate but there seemed to be irreconcilable problems that had been posed and is posing threats both to the viability of the state and the unity of the nation. The national leadership in India were hoping to capitalise on the nationalist fever that swept the country during the independence movement. The Pakistani leadership were hoping to ride on the religious nationalism that they had made the basis for statehood in order to create a strong and united nation. But both nations are still struggling to build their desired nation-states, and the primary threat has come from the question of

"ethnicity" that has been haunting them both. The problems India and Pakistan face along with the other South Asian nations are: a multiplicity of nationalities; the overlapping geographical boundaries among nationalities; and the failure to articulate a common nationality. Let us look at each problem in turn.

The Multiplicity of Nationalities

After creating one religious nation out of the South Asian subcontinent, it was hoped that the process of nation building would be smooth, with both India and Pakistan adopting representative forms of government. The independence movement in India was called the "nationality" movement to underscore the national unity of the Indian state. Similar terminology was used in Pakistan for creating an Islamic nation. But no sooner than the division had been effected, the seemingly benign fissures in the social spheres started widening and a web of nationalities appeared, not only in the multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic India, but also in the so-called homogenous Pakistan. The Pakistan nation-state, within a period of 25 years, proved to be a non-viable state, and more importantly a non-viable nation.

The religious nationalism that was supposed to be the cohesive force for

the Pakistani nationhood was challenged by another form of nationalism, namely linguistic nationalism. The Bengali-speaking majority of East Pakistan asserted their "Bengali" linguistic nationalism. Interestingly, this linguistic nationalism, though it shared borders across the Islamic community, did not accept the Bengali-speaking Hindu population either of India or of Eastern Pakistan. The new nation that emerged, and which set the precedence of secession of nations from nation-states, was called Bangladesh, meaning a nation of Bengalis or Bengal-speaking population. It did not show any interest to take within its fold the numerous Indian Bengalis. Thus, in a theoretical sense, one can call it an assertion of sub-nationality within the larger nationality of South Asian Islamic nationhood.

India also saw the rise of linguistic nationalism. The Indian leadership were alarmed at the prospect of linguistic nationalism escalating into crisis proportions that could threaten the unity of the Indian union. But the problem was managed, before it could actually reach crisis proportions, by a linguistic reorganisation of states in 1956. The essential lesson is the acknowledgement of the aspiration of Indian population to create linguistic nationalities (be it) within the Indian statehood. The conclusion from the linguistic movements and subsequent reorganisation of states on linguistic lines can be that the population of India could not come to terms with the overarching Indian nationality.

Ethno (primordial)-nationalist movements are not unique to India; rather they are a feature of all South Asian countries and some of these movements often cross demarcated state boundaries, which, while rare, could cause inter-state conflicts.

The weakness of Indian nationality is also evident from the fact that it is fiercely challenged by geographical, ethnic and religious nationalities. The demands of regional autonomy, including the appeal for secession, are being raised by linguistically organised states, ethnically composed north-eastern states and not to mention the religious Sikh nationalism that has from time-to-time put constant pressure on the political sovereignty and national unity of India. This constant challenge to India's nationhood exposes the fact that there is no congruity between the political and national identity that according to Ernest Gellner is the fundamental criterion for the evolution of the spirit of nationalism.[2] India, being the most heterogeneous in terms of ethnic configurations, faces

pressing challenges from these forces. This is not to argue that these ethnic identities are always well articulated. But the mere fact that these identities often pose themselves as binaries in relation to the political nationalism of India proves that there are nationalities based on primordial identities that prefer to be recognised outside the Indian national identity.

These ethno (primordial)-nationalist movements are not unique to India; rather they are a feature of all South Asian countries and some of these movements often cross demarcated state boundaries, which, while rare, could cause inter-state conflicts. The examples of India and Pakistan fighting over Kashmir and over Bangladesh are cases in point. Ethnic conflicts internal to the political systems of South Asian states, apart from India, include the Mohajir movement; the Sindh, Pukhtun and the Baloch problems in Pakistan; the Chakma problem in Bangladesh; and the violent Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka. There may be differences in their objectives but the fundamental thing that underlines these movements is their challenge to the sovereignty of the political systems they were supposed to merge into. In the case of India, it is sufficient to mention that the northeastern part of the country alone is home to 36 major or minor ethnic nationalist movements. Added to this, among others, the rise of Hindu nationalism is the evidence of increasing weakness of Indian political nationalism. Bhutan, the other kingdom of the South Asian subcontinent, also suffers from pressures of exclusive ethno-nationalism of Drupka community, which has tried to "turn Bhutan into a mono-ethnic polity".[3] In Nepal, though it has not seen ethnic conflict as such, the provision for ethnic representation in the constituent assembly in the recently held election points towards the sensitivity of the population towards their ethnic identity vis-à-vis the national Nepalese identity. Most groups in Nepal, including the Newars, Tamangs, Magars, Gurung, Sherpa, Limbu, Rai and Tharu, do not accept the labels "ethnic groups" or "minorities". They prefer to be called nations and believe they fulfil all the criteria of nationhood: language, religion, culture, territory and a history of independent statehood, which would be achieved again if the right for secession were granted.

The growing number and intensity of ethno-nationalist assertions and conflicts with the state-system in South Asia shows the lack of an accommodative ability of the political structures called nation-states. The problem persists not only because there are multiple nationalities in South Asian societies, but also because of the incongruity between the social and the geographical connotations of these identities.

Overlapping Geographical Boundaries among Nationalities

There is no unanimity over the definition of an ethnic group or ethnic community, but the working definition of what is an ethnic group is important for our analysis of nationalism since this definition provides the possible bases for formation of ethno-nationalism. An ethnic group is defined as:

> Either a large or small group of people, in either backward or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress and customs and practices), racial similarity, common religion, and the belief in common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group.[4]

Defined this way, "ethnic communities can be of two types: *homeland societies* and *diaspora communities*".[5] Given the long history of inland migration within South Asia, none of the above-mentioned criteria could remain in a geographically compact area, and thus most of the ethnic groups or communities are dispersed within the region. The exceptions to this are the Maldives, to some extents the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the ethnic communities of the northeastern region of India who share fairly compact geographical locations. Such amalgamations of various kinds of identities make it difficult for identifying

nationalities and to take a measure of their potential to threaten the politically constructed national identity of the political systems in the region. One can argue that had there been congruous geographical connotations to each of the bases of ethnic identity formation in South Asia, the present political systems would have failed long ago or would not have been created at the first place. From this perspective this amalgamation seems to have created a social environment conducive for the evolution of a nation as defined by Ernst Barker:

> A nation is a body of men, inhabiting a definite territory, who normally are drawn from different races, but possess a common stock of thoughts and feelings acquired and transmitted during the course of a common history; who on the whole and in the main, thought more in the past than in the present, include in that common stock a common religious belief; who generally and as a rule use a common language as the vehicle of their thoughts and feelings; and who, besides common thoughts and feelings, also cherish a common will, and accordingly form or tend to form, a separate state for the expression and realisation of that will.[6]

In a sense, 90% of the states in the world are multi-ethnic by virtue of the fact that they contain minorities in excess of 5% of their total population. Not all of these states are experiencing national assertions within their political boundaries. Some plausible explanations for the harmonious coexistence of multiple ethnicities in multi-ethnic states are: the inland

diasporic nature of the nationalities; the overwhelming presence of the majority ethnic community; and the proper assimilation of ethnic communities into the constructed national identity of the political system.[7] Problems of ethno-nationalities challenging political nationalities appear in societies where the political system- the state- has failed to articulate a national identity that either accommodates the various nationalities or makes it preferable for the population vis-à-vis the exclusivist communitarian identities.

The Failure of the Articulation of Common Political Nationality

Since most nation-states are artificial creations, it is incumbent upon the political system to arrange for the constant reinforcement of the spirit of political nationalism among the ethno-nationalities that constitute, or are made part of, the political system. The methods adopted by nation-states to reinvigorate the spirit of nationalism vary with the social geography of the states, the nature of the natural nationalities and the nature of the government in charge. As implied in Brendan O'Leary's analysis, maintaining national solidarity is a matter of political expediency for the regime in charge. The two approaches, according to O'Leary, that regimes adopt are to eliminate the differences

among nationalities and to manage the differences. The techniques adopted include both negative and positive ones. Negatively, differences are eliminated by means of genocide and ethnic expulsion, as seen in the case of Germany during the Nazi period, and the positive methods include territorial elimination in the form of secession, decolonisation or partition.[8] Central regimes or states try to manage differences among nationalities either through control strategies or through arbitration and federalism.[9] Irrespective of the methods, the objective of the nation-state and the regime in control is the articulation of a concept of nationalism that stands outside the other primordial identities and into which all primordial nationalities will either spontaneously get assimilated into or can be forced to get assimilated into.

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In South Asia all the methods mentioned above have been adopted in some degrees at some point of the process of nation building. The

partition of the Indian subcontinent and the further partition of Pakistan, the systematic assault on the Chakmas in Bangladesh, the federal features in the Indian constitution, the attempts of imposing Sinhalese ethnic hegemony in Sri Lanka, the recent resolve to turn Nepal into a federation and the expulsion of the Nepalese from Bhutan are examples of the possible methods to create homogenous (mono-ethnic) nation-states out of multi-ethnic states. Needless to say, all of these methods have proved to be inadequate. Ethnic cleansing is not practical in most South Asian countries owing to their democratic structures and long tradition of "inter-communal"[10] comity. Due to the multiplicity in identity and their geographical overlapping, federalism on the basis of natural nationalities is also not workable. Moreover, for the same reason, identity formation keeps changing in most parts of South Asia, making the question of nationality fluid for the regimes, and causing difficulties in effectively controlling potentially threatening nationalities. Though secession has been adopted, seemingly successfully, in the creation of nation-states, it has not been entirely successful in the South Asian region due to the absence of congruity between natural nationalities and geographical requirements.

The amalgamated nature of natural nationalities and the tradition of inter-communal comity present the regimes in charge with arguably the best opportunity to construct "political national identities". But on the contrary, South Asian states periodically suffer from the assertions of natural nationalities. The question is why have political systems failed to articulate an inclusive national identity to which the citizens would willingly refer to instead of referring to their natural nationalities? Often this is answered in a nihilist fashion by blaming the colonial masters for creating permanent fissures in the otherwise coherent socio-political fabric of the region. It becomes imperative to look at the ways the South Asian states have tried to articulate a political national identity and/or the way they try and manage the questions of nationalities in the process of consolidating the concept of the nation-state. The various strategies adopted by the South Asian states are marked by two sets of approaches, namely structural and distributive.[11] While the structural approach does not address the ethnic questions specifically, the distributive approach is aimed at complementing the structural strategies to facilitate integration of natural nationalities into the constructed political national identity.

In India, the distributive approach has included strategies such as improvised secularism and protecting minority rights. The classical concept of secularism that implies a division of

jurisprudence between the temporal and spiritual spheres was modified to allow the regime in charge to create provisions for the minor religious nationalities to protect their identities. The objective of this is to reassure the religious minorities that the protection of their nationalities is guaranteed within the larger political nationality. Similar methods have been adopted to lure nationalities of other connotations. Provisions for minority education, special economic provisions for backward social categories and ensuring adequate political representation are other strategies the Indian political system has adopted for consolidating the political national identity.

> In developing societies like in South Asia, the first upsurge of nationalism was more through emulation than an evolution.

Pakistan, for its part, had the task easy as the nation was created on the basis of a Muslim identity. But it was its cultural diversity that required the reformulating national identity in such a fashion that would encapsulate cultural diversities. In the initial period after independence, Pakistan debated two strategies: i) to create an Islamic nation based on Islam that would accommodate the other nationalities according to the provisions prescribed by the Quran and Shariat; and ii) to promote Pakistani nationality that would accommodate all nationalities and would take care of the cultural diversities. However, Pakistan has not been able to create a consensus around the nature of Islamisation and often such strategies have evoked violent reactions. The best option for Pakistan has been to manage the cultural diversities through proper federalism but its periodic lapses into dictatorship and its natural requirement of concentration of power have turned the attempts of federalisation into unacceptable form of centralisation causing more pressure of (sub)nationalistic assertions on the political sovereignty of Pakistan. Bangladesh, on the other hand, has used Islam as a tool of national identity formation, though it has stopped short of using it the way Pakistan has been trying, but nevertheless Bangladesh's shift from the Indian model of secularism towards religious nationalism has certainly created more problems than its positive uniting effect. The non-Muslim population of Bangladesh, the Hindus and the Buddhist Chakmas, are dissatisfied. While the Hindus have adopted constitutional and political methods to get their grievances redressed, the Chakmas have turned violent and the problem is far from over for Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka is a case of strategy of concealed majoritarian domination. The regime in charge adopted constitutional methods to ensure minority representation but

the distributive mechanism was fixed to ensure the marginalisation of ethnic minorities. Among the positive strategies the Sri Lanka regime has adopted include secularism and ethnic electoral federalism. But such strategies have been trumped by the discriminatory distributive strategies and the dynamics of competitive electoral politics that ensures the dominance of the Sinhalese over the ethnic Tamils. The regime in charge in Nepal saw its best bet in articulating a political nationalism that included the principal identity of most of the natural nationalities, i.e. Hinduism, and those who were left out of this identity were allowed to practise their own identities within the political identity of the Nepali nationality. A single language, Khas (Nepali), was adopted as the official language to project a concrete image of Nepali nationality. Nepal, though it has not seen large-scale ethnic cleavage, has felt the pressure of nationalities standing against the attempt of the regime in charge to submerge their nationalities within the overarching Nepali nationality. Fresh attempts have been made to develop a nationality of the new Republic of Nepal. The provisions

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for ethnic representation and plans for creating a federation are steps in that regard. Bhutan seems to have managed the problem of nationalities better than other South Asian states. There are two primary nationalities populating Bhutan: the ethnic Bhutanese and the ethnic Nepalis. There have been some concerns about the Nepalis trying to replace the ethnic Bhutanese from the position of majority and power. Such concerns have been fixed through imposing restrictions on the movement of the ethnic Nepali population. The Bhutan regime has embarked on a strategy of inclusion by adopting a method of proportional representation, the absorption of Nepalis in official positions and encouraging social alliances between the two ethnic communities. The nearly homogenous Maldives has had no problem of nationality but regionalism is emerging as a problem. After the withdrawal of the British from the Addu atoll, there seemed to be the problem of geographical nationalism, but the regime in charge has adopted the strategy of development to lure the population of the Addu atoll into the national mainstream of Maldives.

Conclusion

The discussions above on the attempts to promote political nationalism within South Asian countries by their regimes underlines the fact that the process of nation-building is still ongoing and there are both optimistic and pessimistic conclusions to draw about these states succeeding in constructing nation-states. The present forms of nationalistic assertions in the South Asian states are experiencing a transition of what Gellner calls from the "low cultures"[12] into the "high cultures". This is essentially a part of the modernisation project that western societies experienced long back in history. But the essential difference in the two processes is that in the case of the west the transformation ended with the consolidation of nation-states, while in case of South Asia, it has led to instability of the political states and a perpetual fight between the primordial low cultures and the state, and among the low cultures themselves.

This generates the most important question: is the concept of nation-state inappropriate for South Asia? Or to put it differently, is it modernity with nationalism (with its emphasis on homogeneity) as its political offshoot that is preventing the articulation of nationality or national identity that is congruent to the nationalist aspirations of the population forming the political units in the region?[13] By any analysis,

the development of nationalism was an evolution in western societies. In contrast, in developing societies like in South Asia, the first upsurge of nationalism was more through emulation than an evolution. The leaders of the freedom movements in South Asia had a notion of nationalism that was firmly grounded on the territorial connotation of the nation-state and the statist ideals inherited form the colonial masters, the west.[14] The political units of South Asia qualify as nations only if we take Anthony Gidden's definition of a nation. He defines a nation as a "collectivity existing within a clearly defined territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states".[15] He further suggests that nationalism is a psychological phenomenon, which is evident from "the affiliation of individuals to a set of symbols and beliefs emphasising commonality among the members of a political order."[16]

> If homogeneity is a pre-requisite for nationalism, South Asia lacks the geographical support to add territoriality so essential for the formation of nation-state.

South Asia as a socio-political space did not and does not have the requisite socio-economic infrastructure to build

and hold the western-defined political superstructure. Does that make South Asia an ancient or traditional state?[17] There was a hope that if some Western nations such as the United States of America and Switzerland, which were not homogenous but could manage to evolve as successful nation-states, could also evolve into nation-states then political units in South Asia could as well. The hope was grounded on two historical facts: i) "prior to the British conquest, relations between the regional peoples and the sovereign power had never been regulated wholly by religion", and ii) "a web of economic and social linkages had survived periods of imperial consolidation, crisis and collapse, to bind the subcontinent into a loosely layered framework of interdependence".[18] One can argue that the post-colonial nation-states in South Asia have survived for more than half a century (with one secession only), thus providing sufficient evidence of a functioning concept of civic nationalism. The counter argument to this is that mere survival of political units defined by a border does not prove the consolidation and success of nation-state. The essential measure of the strength of a nation-state lies in the functioning of the essential feature of modern nation-state system, i.e. the "representative form of government" or democracy.

The alleged failure of South Asian political systems in articulating an all-inclusive nationalism is not due to them being illegitimate or artificial, but because of the attempt to develop nation-states in the region on the basis of homogeneity in line with Western Europe. The emergence of nation-states in the west provided evidence in support of the idea that nation-states are essentially homogenous and that multi-community societies are not suitable for nationhood. But such an argument is incomplete as it is based on the assertive quality of nationality or identity and ignores the adaptive and integrative natures of identity. The state, being an artificial creation, can certainly be maintained by creating and recreating civic virtues. The power of nationalism does not rest in inventing historical commonality to arouse emotional communal feelings; rather it rests in getting associated with demonstrated success as a unit, and if that unity is represented by geographical territory, then it creates a successful nation-state.

The South Asian experience of nation building exposes the weaknesses in the concept of nationalism.

The people of South Asia during colonial times had only one basis to get united into one nation and that was the "will" to belong to one nation. This "will" prevailed over all the other

criteria of group formation. But the important question is has the will been lost? Or have the people willed to form primordial nationalities? The answer lies in the failure of the political units in getting the constructed nationality endorsed through the daily plebiscite.[19] Nation-building projects in most South Asian societies have a two goals: i) to articulate the concept of nationalism in the modern sense of the term; and ii) to preserve the distinctive feature of the endogenous culture vis-à-vis the cultural colonisation of the western form of modernity. On both the nation-building projects face severe challenges. If homogeneity is a pre-requisite for nationalism, South Asia lacks the geographical support to add territoriality so essential for the formation of nation-state. On the second front, nationalist movements lack the power of resistance owing to the fractures already created by percolation of western cultural values the South Asian society during the period of colonisation and sustained by the forces of globalisation.

The nationalism that created nation-states in the west is not as universal as it is made out to be. Its success in the west has depended upon its being imported from other places and rightly modified in the light of the indigenous traditions. In South Asia, the idea of nation and nationalism were imported from the West through the colonial masters but the post colonial leadership have failed to modify it in the light of the rich tradition of the region, which has resulted in *a problem.* The reason for the non-modification of the original idea of nationalism by mixing up local traditions is the assumption that the local traditions are not modern and are against the modern idea of nation and nationalism.

The South Asian experience of nation building exposes the weaknesses in the concept of nationalism. It raises the central question: is nationalism an essential feature that every state must possess? The failure of the articulation of political nationalism congruent to the political boundaries of South Asian political units proves that it is not always possible to build states on homogeneity of any kinds, not even cultural as suggested by Gellner. The civic nationalism that inspired the Americans and the French to build nations or nation-states seems to not be working in South Asia, a development with calls for modifications to the concept of nationalism.

Endnotes

1 If nationhood has to have a territory then the concept of nationhood in Indian subcontinent is composite in nature. In his book *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Oxford University Press, 1994), Partha Chatterjee discussed various components of nationhood under the construct of "fragment", though his categorisation is not exhaustive and many more components can be identified that constitute a nation in the subcontinent. The notion of nation in the Indian subcontinent certainly transcends the identity of each of such components and fragments.

2 Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, p. 1.

3 Shibashis Chatterjee, "Ethnic Conflicts in South Asia: A Constructivist Reading", *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 2005), p. 83.

4 Rajat Ganguly and Ray Taras, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict: The International Dimension*, New York, Addison Wesley Longman, 1998, p. 9.

5 Urmila Phanis and Rajat Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia,* (revised edition), New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001, p. 19.

6 Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in its Formation,* London, Methuen, 1927, p. 17; quoted in Phanis and Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, pp. 19-20.

7 In most cases, particularly in Asia and Africa, state-building preceded nation-building, making the national identity of the state not as natural as ethnic nationalities.

8 Brendan O'Leary, "Introduction" and "The Elements of Right-Sizing and Right Peopling of State", in Brendan O'Leary, Ian S. Lustick and Thomas Callaghy (eds.), *Right-Sizing the State: The Politics of Moving Borders*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

9 Ibid.

10 The term communal here is used to refer to groupings that could be formed on various identities.

11 Phanis and Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, p. 146.

12 "Low culture" here refers to the culture of the agroliterate societies. Gellner identifies nationalism with "high culture" prevalent in industrialised societies from the "wild" or low culture that characterises agroliterate societies. See, Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 50-52.

13 In line with the endogenous conception of nationhood in South Asia, nationalist aspiration means preserving the primordial identities within a composite political unit.

14 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 73.

15 Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1985, p. 116.

16 Ibid.

17 There cannot be a single answer to what could have been better suited political structures for South Asia. A probable alternative could have been the creation of accommodative political structures that provided a space for the traditional institutions to operate and act as agents of modernisation.

18 Ayesha Jalal, "South Asia", *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, Academic Press, 2000, p. 2.

19 As Ernest Renan argues, "[a] nation's existence is a daily plebiscite". Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?", translation of Renan's Lecture delivered at Soborne, 11 March 1882, at www.cooper.edu [last visited 12 January 2014].