

SOUTH ASIA: HISTORY, POLITICS, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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of the International Online Conference**
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2023) organised by the Department of South Asian History of the Institute
of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, in
collaboration with the School of International Studies (SIS), Jawaharlal
Nehru University, New Delhi. The papers feature a wide scope of issues
pertaining to the role of ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic factors in the
history and politics of the South Asian subcontinent.

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INTRODUCTION / ВВЕДЕНИЕ

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NATIONS, STATES AND IDENTITIES IN SOUTH ASIA: RESEARCH CONTEXTS AND TRACKS¹

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Discussion on the issues of nations, states and identities has never been more relevant in India, Russia and a majority of countries across the globe. It is obvious that the growth of religious and ethnic nationalisms, separatist and autonomous movements in the present-day world has put forward the necessity of rethinking these processes within the pertinent policies pursued by states.

Questions of ethno-political, ethno-linguistic and ethno-confessional diversity have always been of paramount importance for South Asia – a region that accounts for almost 25 percent of the total world population, over 19 thousand languages and dialects, as well as more than ten faith traditions and many religious beliefs. Ethnic, linguistic and religious identity issues increasingly get politicized being a powerful tool for mobilisation for the national and local political, economic, cultural and other elites. More often than not, such issues become a basis for centrifugal tendencies, which represent a huge threat to the stability and integrity of South Asian countries. Enhanced by social differences as well as by territorial disputes (quite a number of which are rooted in the colonial period), ethnic, linguistic and religious discords have remained most relevant for interstate relations in South Asia throughout the past decades.

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The experience of the Republic of India – the largest country of the region – exposes a unique variety of federal authorities' efforts aimed at the management and regulation of ethno-linguistic and ethno-religious conflicts in the country. It seems most feasible to apply the experience of India for solving typologically similar ethnonational problems in other polyethnic, multilingual and multireligious societies. This is especially important for countering terrorism and ideological extremism, which – as world experience shows – often are a consistent consequence of the growth of ethnic and religious nationalisms.

The online conference held on December 1, 2023, by the Department of South Asian History, Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, in collaboration with the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, aimed at discussing various – both historical and contemporary, internal and external – aspects of South Asia's ethno-linguistic and ethno-confessional diversity within the contexts of relevant national policies.

The broad themes of the conference included the following: nation states and state nations; ethnic, linguistic and religious belonging in the globalization and de-globalization eras; historiography of ethno-political, ethno-linguistic and ethno-confessional conflicts in South Asia; role of state in the settlement of ethnicity-, language- and religion-based disputes: history and modernity; South Asia's ethno-linguistic and ethno-confessional diversity as perceived from outside.

This volume comprises extended abstracts of papers, which cover a wide range of related topics presented at the conference. Issues of nations, nationalism and federalism in India are discussed within historical and geopolitical contexts by Prof Ajay Patnaik, Prof Sanjay K. Bhardwaj, Prof Larisa Chereshneva and Dr Abhijeet Singh. Recent trends of de-globalisation in South Asia are addressed in Dr Asma Kouser's essay. Dr Rajan Kumar depicts India's foreign policy priorities in the subcontinent, while Dr Boris Volkhonskiy dwells upon the role of regional diversities in politics regarding them as a possible serious obstacle in maintaining the national unity of the country.

Six papers are dedicated to subregional aspects of ethnicity and religion in South Asian politics. The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are in focus of Prof Sangeeta Thapliyal's and Dr Liudmila Khokhlova's talks: Prof Thapliyal speaks about identity politics in Nepal; Dr Khokhlova's paper is dedicated to the issues of ethno-linguistic belonging related to the Punjabi community in Pakistan.

Prof Archana Upadhyay presents a comprehensive overview of conflict dynamics in North East India – an area which features a transition zone of diverse linguistic, racial and religious streams simultaneously linking India with East and Southeast Asia in terms of culture and commerce. Dr Ilya Spektor discusses topical issues pertaining to the non-Hindi-speaking communities of Delhi (Bengalis, Tamils, Malayalis, Tibetans). The theme of religious identities is taken up by Dr Svetlana Sidorova who discusses the role of Hindu and Buddhist presence and coexistence in the city of Nagpur, and by Dr Alina Filimonova whose paper is dedicated to the role of Sufi institutions in Telangana Politics.

The final section papers deal with perspectives in South Asian Studies as seen by Russia's scholars. Prof Eugenia Vanina compares two models of imperial integration – those of the Mughals in India and the Rurikids/Romanovs in Russia. Dr Anna Bochkovskaya depicts important issues in Soviet and Russian historiography related to ethnonationalism and politics in South India. Prof Alexandra Safronova analyses the present-day state of comparative studies in contemporary social and political issues within India's and Russia's contexts.

Discussion on the issues of nations, states and identities in South Asia as well as in Russia will be continued within the framework of academic cooperation between the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, and the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Issues of religious and ethnic nationalisms in India are in focus of a current research project 'Ethnonationalism in the Republic of India: Regional Autonomy Tendencies (Telangana/Andhra, Punjab) and the Federal Government Policy' supported by the Russian Science Foundation (Russian acronym RNF) – the leading government authority in present-day Russia, which provides funding for research in nine fields including the humanities.

The project members include Dr Anna Bochkovskaya (head of the project) and Dr Alina Filimonova representing Lomonosov Moscow State University, Prof Alexei Sagimbayev from the Bryansk State University, and Alexander Gepalov from the Lipetsk State Pedagogical University.

Our project focuses on a comprehensive historical research in ethnic nationalism in the Republic of India and the policy of federal government aimed at negotiating centrifugal trends in the vastly populated country.

Two areas in India have been chosen as case studies, namely, Telangana/Andhra and Punjab, with the task to present a comparative analysis of ethnic and religious nationalisms of two ethnic groups in India – the Telugus and Punjabis – against the background of ethnonational policy of federal governments in the second half of the XXth – early XXIst centuries.

The Telugus represent a large (over 85 mln) South Indian peoplehood – a culturally diverse society divided along several lines, including religion. They had been split up territorially for a long time: before India's independence (1947), part of the Telugu community lived in the Telangana region of the Hyderabad princely state, while the Coastal Telugus remained within the Madras Province located at the Bay of Bengal shore and ruled by the colonial administration of British India. Later, the long-standing Telugu national movement in Hyderabad and Madras, then in the states of Hyderabad and Andhra, and, since 1956, in Andhra Pradesh, resulted in the setting up of a separate Telangana state in 2014.

The Punjabis basically residing in the North-West of the subcontinent are one ethnic group that has mostly suffered during the 1947 Partition: a new state border between India and the Muslim Pakistan cut apart the British province of Punjab: two thirds of its territory remained in Pakistan and one third – in India. Currently, 90 mln of Punjabis – followers of Islam – live in the Pakistani province of Punjab while 30 mln reside in India, predominantly in the state of Punjab. A majority of India's Punjabis are Sikhs. Religious factor became a backbone of administrative reconfiguration of the Indian part of Punjab in 1966 when part of it became Hindi-speaking (non-Sikh) Haryana. For two decades starting from the 1970s, Sikh ethnonationalism remained the core of a separatist movement aimed at setting up the independent Khalistan state in the North-West of India, while federal governments managed to settle the Punjab crisis only in the early 1990s. At the same time, pro-Khalistani ideas still circulate in the large and affluent Punjabi Sikh diaspora which is closely connected to the initial, India-based ethnic group. Diaspora also generates and actively promotes the idea of *Punjabiyyat* / Punjabiness as a common historical and cultural heritage of all Punjabis, as well as supports the virtual construct of a unified Punjab undivided by current political boundaries. The Indian authorities cannot ignore this factor while working out the Punjabi vector of the state ethnonational strategy.

The novelty of our research lies, firstly, in the fact that the project represents a comprehensive comparative study of the two regions. Also, though India's and foreign researchers focused on many specific aspects of the Telugu-related topics, the Telangana/Andhra area (unlike Punjab) has remained a 'blank page' for Russian scholars. In recent decades, Russia's Indology has featured a slight 'turn' to the regional studies, but the correlation of specificity of India's regions has remained out of Russian historians' view. To this end, comparative analysis of the dynamics of ethno-confessional situation in two strategic regions representing the North-West and South of India is one important goal of the project.

Secondly, the novelty is stipulated by the introduction and in-depth research of new documentary sources from India's archives and information repositories, as well as materials from Indian government agencies, ministries and departments.

The project materials are intended for use by historians/orientalists in teaching such courses as the *History of India* and *History of Asia*, as well as *International Relations* in higher educational institutions at the MA and PhD levels, and in training highly qualified research experts. The project results will also be useful for political scientists, ethnologists, ethnoconflictologists of the Russian Federation and the Republic of India, as well as for those engaged in the practical diplomacy of both countries.

Our tasks for 2023 were to look at the history of India's federalism including the final decades of the colonial period, to focus on the historiography of Punjab and Andhra, and to explore the issues of belonging within the specified regions. As a result, a total of nine papers have been published by the project participants so far (see References).

Within the colonial history domain, Prof Alexei Sagimbayev (2023) examines main aspects of administrative and political transformations in British India at the turn of the 1910s – 1920s in the context of the processes of development of the national liberation movement, as well as ethno-political consolidation in certain Indian regions. As is known, the interwar period was marked by a significant transformation of the British colonial system, which affected, among other things, the management mechanisms of Indian possessions. Implemented on the basis of the law adopted in December 1919 by a special legislative act of the British Parliament, the administrative and political reform, which went down in history as the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, was an attempt to modernize the management system in India. Prof Sagimbayev focuses on rethinking

the reforms' dimensions as well as the subsequent transformations carried out by the colonial administration, which contributed to the formation of elements of the political culture of Indian society, and also, to a certain extent, laid the foundations of the future federal system of independent India. Within the same track, Alexander Gepalov (2023) dwells upon a broad perception of India's ethnoreligious issues by Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), India's independence movement activist, and a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress.

A co-authored paper titled *Ethnonationalism and Politics in Contemporary India: Telugu/Andhra Struggle for Autonomy (Issues in Historiography)* (Bochkovskaya et al., 2023) discusses issues in the contemporary historiography of Telugu ethnonationalism as part of research on national movements and development of political consciousness of the peoples of independent India. The authors put forward aspects of foreign and Soviet/Russian scholarly studies along the following lines: nationalism and federalism within the all-India context (with a particular focus on South India); the setting up of Vishalandhra and building it into India's administrative territorial framework of the 1950s; the Telangana movement, or the 'Greater Andhra' restructuring process.

Two Punjab-related papers explore the problem of Punjabi ethnic nationalism in India, Pakistan, and in the diaspora. Dr Anna Bochkovskaya (2023) analyses the role of Punjabi-Sikh diaspora in supporting and heating up secessionist ideas in contemporary India. In focus of the article titled *The Punjab Issue and the Sikh Diaspora: Calls for Secession in the XXI Century* are specific features of the most visible non-governmental organizations based beyond South Asia, which advocate an idea of setting up an independent Khalistan state in the north-west of India (Punjab); activities of the 'Sikhs for Justice' group aimed at launching the 'Khalistan Referendum 2020'; and 2022–2023 developments in Punjab related to the performance of Amritpal Singh Sandhu, a present-day 'successor' of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (1947–1984) – a charismatic leader of the Sikh separatists in the late 1970s – early 1980s.

Dr Alina Filimonova's essay *Punjabiyyat vs Punjabistan: Main Features of Punjabi Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan* (2023) discusses specific features of the Pakistani *Punjabiyyat*, which is interpreted as Punjabi ethnic nationalism. Having analyzed the *Punjabiyyat* in the perspective of classic theories of ethnic nationalism and putting it in the narrower context of South Asian nationalism concepts, the author

defines its characteristics and explains the connection between the specific form of Punjabi ethnic nationalism in Pakistan and the process of ‘Punjabization’ understood as the overwhelming influence of Punjabis in the country, which has begun since its inception in 1947.

Ideas of religious and caste belonging within the Punjab context are in focus of Anna Bochkovskaya’s paper *Adi Dharm: The ‘Original Religion’ of Punjab’s Scheduled Castes* (2023) dealing with the Adi Dhar(a)m protest movement, which originated in the 1920s to embrace low-caste members of the Sikh community who were eager to establish their own religious identity. The Adi Dharm was listed in the 1931 colonial Census as a separate religion boasting almost half a million followers, and in the subsequent censuses, as a caste. The protest movement declined by the mid-1940s, but in the 1970s it revived owing to a great extent to the support of the Punjabi diaspora. A new phase of the Adi Dharm history stems from the growth of social and political activities of Dalits (‘the downtrodden’) in India and particularly in Punjab where the Scheduled Castes account for over 30 percent of the population – a reality that cannot be ignored by the state and central governments.

Our research prospects for 2024 include the continuation of studies in historiography and history of India’s federalism; evaluation of Telangana’s performance as a state (2014–2024); analysis of 2023–2024 elections results in Telangana, Andhra-Pradesh and Punjab; comparative studies concerning disputed capitals (Hyderabad in Telangana and Andhra-Pradesh vs Chandigarh in Punjab and Haryana) and the role of ethno-religious minorities in the political development of both areas. We will continue research on the issue of *Punjabiyat* and the broader theme of belonging within the framework of ethnic and religious nationalisms in federative systems.

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Part I
NATIONS, STATES AND GEOPOLITICS
НАЦИИ, ГОСУДАРСТВА И ГЕОПОЛИТИКА

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**GEOPOLITICAL HISTORY OF THE INDIAN
SUBCONTINENT, 1947–1971**

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Introduction. At the time of independence in 1947, the geopolitics of the Indian subcontinent was polarized due to the British legacy of religious divide and rule, partition of the subcontinent and problematizing of the Kashmir issue. Indian subcontinent was very important for Western strategic goals due to its geographical proximity to East and West Asia. However, given India's strong national movement and opposition to Western colonialism, it was clear that India is going to move away from Western strategic orbit after independence.

Even before India's independence in August 1947, Nehru took the initiative to organize the Asian Relations Conference, which took place in Delhi from 23 March to 2 April, 1947, where 28 Asian countries participated. Five Soviet Central Asian republics, apart from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participated with their own delegates.

Around the same time, Nehru was broadening his world vision to include countries beyond Asia. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) had its origins in the Bandung Conference of April 1945 in Indonesia, inspired by some world leaders including Nehru. Bandung formulated the concept of non-alignment focusing on decolonisation, the alleviation of poverty, and economic development, which were adopted at the

founding NAM summit of 1961 in Belgrade. Principally NAM provided a strong basis for the foreign policy of its members, especially the idea of 'Strategic Autonomy'.

Western Strategies in the Subcontinent. Realising that the Indian leadership is going to move away from Western influence, the Western powers manoeuvred to pressurise and contain India, first by dividing the country and then using the Kashmir issue. The tensions between India and Pakistan following partition had made the region vulnerable to external influences. The 1947 Indo-Pak war created the ground for advancing Western objectives in the subcontinent. At the United Nations in 1948, Anglo-American efforts succeeded in bailing out Pakistan and the Resolution failed to condemn Islamabad for aggression and occupation of a part of Kashmir in violation of the legitimate accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India.

The motive behind the British initiative, strengthened by American support during the discussion on Kashmir at the UN Security Council, was securing Pakistani cooperation against the Soviets. Besides, the US and Britain were keen on developing strong ties with Pakistan since the country was considered the conduit to West Asia during the Suez crisis (1947–1956). From 1948 and in subsequent discussions at the UN on Kashmir, the Western powers tried to corner India, and the Soviet Union had to use its veto in support of India, the first time being in 1957 (Nath 1965).

The US motives behind patronising Pakistan lay in its importance for the balance of power in the region and in its greater reliability as a partner. Moreover, Pakistan's proximity to the Persian Gulf made it useful for protecting the Middle East oil fields in the eventuality of hostilities in Asia (Palit 2001). The US gradually began encouraging Pakistan as a partner and an ally. The country joined US sponsored defence pacts like the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), and began receiving American military aid and weapons. Given these Western moves in the subcontinent, India was left with no option but to move closer to the Soviet Union.

Emerging Indo-Soviet Relations. With a visit by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the Soviet Union in June 1955, and First Secretary of the Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev's return trip to India in the autumn of 1955 relations between the two countries reached a new level. While in India, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union supported India's stance on Kashmir. The Soviet Union gave India economic and

military assistance. In February 1962, the first batch of four out of 12 initially ordered MiG-21 planes were delivered to India. By mid-1965, Soviet Union was India's major source of diplomatic and military support (Intelligence Report 1972).

After the 1960 U-2 spy plane incident, the Soviet Union realised that Pakistan's territory was being used for US operations against it. This further raised the importance of India for the Soviet Union in South Asia.

The US-China-Pakistan Axis in South Asia. The Sino-Indian war of 1962 brought a new factor into the geopolitics of the Subcontinent, where China now became a key player in close partnership with Pakistan. The war in 1962 also played a vital role in improving relations between China and Pakistan. For both countries, India could be brought under pressure from both fronts in case of war with India by either of them. China began to support Pakistan on the Kashmir issue to counter India.

Finding the strategic environment in Pakistan's favour, Pakistan sought to find a military solution to the Kashmir issue and started a war with India in 1965. Islamabad expected indirect support from his Western allies and China. During the 1965 war, the Soviet Union had offered its good offices for a peaceful settlement between the two warring states. The Prime Ministers of India and President of Pakistan met at Tashkent from January 4–10, 1966. The Tashkent Agreement brought an end to the war. On the other hand, the West did not allow any criticism of Pakistan at the UN for its aggression.

Another milestone in the Subcontinent's geopolitics was 1971, when Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan. The Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 occurred during the Bangladesh liberation war in East Pakistan. Indian army entered Bangladesh on 3 December 1971 and the Pakistani army capitulated in Dhaka on 16 December 1971.

Many significant developments were taking place before and during the 1971 war. The West and its allies were supporting Pakistan and were putting pressure on India to stay away from supporting Bangladesh liberation movement. Thrice in the UN Security Council, USA and UK tried to prevent India from giving military support to Bangladesh liberation forces. Each time the USSR used its veto in favour of India.

Having failed at the UN Security Council, the US took a very aggressive posture. On 10th December 1971, the US Seventh Fleet carrying seventy fighters and bombers was sailing towards the Indian Ocean. The Soviet navy pre-empted the Western move by sending its nuclear armed submarines based in Vladivostok.

The Indian government by then was emboldened by the Indo–Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation signed in August 1971 that specified mutual strategic cooperation in the event of any armed conflict with a third party by either of them (Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971). The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation of 1971 became a robust counter-weight to the Washington-Beijing-Islamabad axis in South Asia. The twenty-year Treaty would protect India’s vital geopolitical interests and safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Conclusion. The Indo-Soviet Treaty and the independence of Bangladesh changed the geopolitics of Indian subcontinent for nearly three decades. There were no wars and India was insulated in its eastern front, where Pakistan lost the advantage. Indo-Soviet relations went to the next level where defence, space, nuclear, economic and cultural cooperation defined the deepening bond between the two countries. During 1979–89, the years of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, US-China-Pakistan collaboration vitiated the strategic environment in South Asia. That is the time when Indo-Soviet cooperation became the crucial element for India’s security.

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INDIAN RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM VS FEDERALISM: THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN THE INTEGRATION OF PRINCELY STATES (BHOPAL, JUNAGADH, HYDERABAD)²

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2024 marks the 77th anniversary of the historic transfer of power in the colonial India and the formation of the Indian Union and Pakistan. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the role of personality with a focus on Sardar Vallabhai Patel in the integration of princely states during the partition of India in 1947. The princely states (numbering around 600) accounted for 45 percent of India's territory and encompassed some 93.2 mln people or 24 percent of the country's population. During British rule they were considered formally independent, but according to the supremacy principle the Crown was their suzerain.

Theoretically, there were wide prospects for the self-determination of princely states during the transfer of power: 1) joining the Indian Union; 2) joining Pakistan; 3) maintaining their formal independence; 4) creating a Federation of States. The Indian National Congress (INC), India's leading party, believed that supreme power was to be transferred to the Government of India and that princely states were to become provinces of the Dominion of India. The creator of Pakistan, the Muslim League, was ready to recognize the independence of princely states in order to include them in Pakistan. The Congress and the Muslim League launched a struggle for the states.

The articles on Princely India in the Independence Act were the following:

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- princes will retain titles, the right of extraterritoriality and personal property;
- they will join one of the two dominions, but only three spheres of activity of these states will be transferred to the central government: defence, foreign policy and the development of communication routes (NAI. Ministry of States 1947: 23–26).

In pre-independent India Vallabhbhai Patel became Head of the Department of States for the Indian Union. He managed to integrate almost all the States into it and played the main part in the creation of the modern India. ‘Patel is a realist, a very reasonable man,’ Viceroy Mountbatten reported to London (Constitutional Relations 1982: 687).

But a serious problem for India and personally for Patel happened to be **Junagadh**, a small princely state located at the Kathiawar peninsula. About 80 percent of Junagadh’s population were Hindus, but the Muslim Nawab joined Pakistan on August 15, 1947. Shah Nawaz drafted and handed over to Muhammad Ali Jinnah the treaty and accompanying documents on the transfer of Junagadh to the Muslim dominion. Many Hindu families began to move to areas that belonged to the Indian Union, and the orderly payment of taxes stopped. The reaction of the Indian Government was extremely harsh. Patel rejected Mountbatten’s proposal to resolve the issue through arbitration (Sardar Patel’s Correspondence 1972: 388–389). By order of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhai Patel, the troops were deployed to Junagadh in November 1947. A referendum was held in Junagadh with participation of two hundred thousand people. Only 91 people opposed the entry of Junagadh into the Indian Union (Menon 1985: 148–149). The state was incorporated into the Indian Union.

The next difficult case was **Bhopal**, a Hindu state headed by a Muslim ruler Nawab Hamidullah. Pushing the interests of the Hindu majority of his state into the background, he said that ‘150 thousand militant Muslims of Bhopal will never agree to join a purely Hindu dominion’ (Constitutional Relations 1982: 592). He spoke about his possible service in Pakistan, first as a governor, and then as a successor to Jinnah – as a governor-general. The Muslim League leader promised him an opportunity to use Karachi as a free port, jurisdiction over the Hyderabad (Sindh) – Jodhpur railway, free trade in weapons, and grain supply to his areas (NAI. Political Branch 1948: 20–23). The Nawab felt isolated and eventually gave in signing a document on joining the Indian Union: he

informed Patel that there ‘he was treated with understanding’ (Hodson 1985: 375).

The most complicated case, **Hyderabad**, home to about 20 million people, was the largest princely state in India. A Muslim dynasty ruled Hyderabad, which was a predominantly Hindu state. Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan was reputed to be the richest man in the world; he enjoyed the support of the Muslim League and personally its leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Although the followers of Islam accounted for only about 15 percent of the state’s population, almost the entire government, army and police were Muslim. On June 12, 1947, the Nizam issued a *firman* declaring his decision not to join any of the newly formed dominions and, upon the return of ‘supreme power’ to him, ‘declare the sovereignty and independence of Hyderabad’ (Constitutional Relations 1982: 308). However, until August 15, no decision was made on the annexation of Hyderabad either to India or Pakistan. It was known that the Nizam was building up his army and buying weapons in Europe. Patel advocated decisive action against Hyderabad (NAI. Hyderabad Branch 1948: 11–25).

Meanwhile, in Hyderabad, the position of the Indian government was regarded as weakness. In 1948, inter-communal riots began in the princely state, the instigators of which were radical Muslim Razakars. In the eastern part of Hyderabad, in Telangana, a peasant uprising took place. The news that Mir Osman Ali Khan did not intend to join the Indian Union boosted the indignation of the local Hindus – the Telugu people. In July–August 1948, comprehensive preparations began for the military operation codenamed ‘Polo’ against the Nizam. On September 7, the Government of India announced the deployment of a military contingent to Hyderabad. There was no fighting. In 108 hours, Mir Osman Ali Khan surrendered (NAI. Hyderabad Branch 1948: 27–32). The state was incorporated into the Indian Union.

Thus, the Indian Government’s and personally Sardar Vallabhai Patel’s performance demonstrated that when the issue of India’s religious and ethnic nationalism vs federalism came up, the government tried to apply political methods to the utmost and avoided open military action. This proved to be the best possible course of action for the integration of those princely states who had no other alternative due to geographical reasons – regardless of their economic or administrative potential, internal political intrigues or religious identity. Towards this colossal objective of ensuring a ‘United India’, Sardar Patel became the ‘Indian Bismarck’.

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NATION STATE BUILDING IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH ASIA

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A closer look at each of the South Asian countries reveals that these states are still in the process of nation building, in more specific terms, they are also in the process to institutionalise the democratic institutions of the state. It recalls me 'the notion of nation' or the vision in the minds of region's national leadership and the freedom fighters in the course of their struggle against the colonial masters and undemocratic regimes. Were they aiming to build an inclusive state or a state based on exclusive ideals? Were they struggling to bring inclusive development and democracy or a state which advances the interests of majority community at the cost of minorities? An understanding of the subject and a retrospective interrogation will answer many of these queries of contemporary South Asia.

In fact, in the developing societies like South Asia, identities are built and constructed on two assumptions: '**crisis of success**' and '**crisis of failure**'. Crisis of success is based on the principle of a cooperative, inclusive and welfarist society while the crisis of failure works on the ideas of exclusiveness based on religious, ethnic and linguistic construct.

The problem gets even more acute when we deal with the developing world like South Asia that has a heterogeneous population, which has trans-national affinities and socio-cultural linkages. With the disappearance of the 'other' which was the colonial master previously, the veneer of glue that welded these disparate communities precariously into a nation, started giving way to numerous fissiparous tendencies. Nations plunged into the vortex of either military dictatorships, or religious resurgence or ethnic backlash. This happened primarily because of the erosion of the anti-colonial nationalistic hegemony and the crisis of legitimacy which was tackled either by harping back on primordial appeals like religion, or ethnicity, or by resorting to the discipline and repression of military

dispensations, or often by the above factors working in conjunction. However, the then anti-colonial movement itself faced with multifarious problems of ethnicity, religion and the region.

Pluralism and inclusiveness of India is a fact that gets amply reflected in her social federalism, recognizing and respecting diversities, and providing social and political space for the articulation of multiple identities. All these identities and variations are as distinct in their distributions and dimensions, as is a nation state itself. And yet, this mammoth polity is a single geographical and sovereign territory, maintaining the unity as well as diversity. Both co-exist in a single framework (Majeed 2002).

In fact, during the colonial period, the visionary leaders and freedom fighters were fighting against two evils: one within the society and the other against the colonial masters. Institutionally, the Indian National Congress played a constructive and visionary role in building India as a nation during the course of its freedom struggle against colonial masters. The party was internally federal in organisation with a high degree of intra-party democracy, strong penchant for consensus with an ingrained vision of unity in diversity. The masses were mobilised along the ideals of democratic rights, civil liberty, woman empowerment, social justice and secularism. Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of non-violence, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim amity and equality for woman were well received by the people of India during the freedom struggle. Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel gave a definite shape to the ideals, on the basis of which the politically free India was constructed. Many of these leaders stood by the ideals of nationalism, secularism, socialism, parliamentary democracy and world peace. Finally, this historical consensus successfully manifested into a 'consensus of the post liberation India'.

Communalism divested of its patriotic credentials by the onward sweep of the national movement, inevitably generated a 'two-nation theory', in which the other nation was seen as the main enemy, and the British as possible allies. From the partition of Bengal in 1905 to Mohammad Iqbal's speech of the All-India Muslim League in 1930, the notion of a separate Muslim nation took root until the 1940 Lahore Resolution explicitly propounded the goal of Pakistan. In process to understand the creation of multiple nationalistic constructs in British India, one needs to have a retrospective analysis of British divide and rule policies, which had created ethno-religious cleavages in Indian society (Bhardwaj 2011).

The partition of Bengal had given a sense of religious territoriality in the minds of Bengali Muslim community within a geographical space. Later, it was well reflected in the original Lahore Resolution of 1940, which was made to represent by A.K. Fazlul Haque, who demanded co-religiousnistic states for Muslims in Muslim majority areas. He stated that ‘the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zone of India, should be grouped to be constitute **‘independent states’** in which the continent units shall be autonomous and sovereign’. Although, his two nations were based on the Pakistan proposal which was originally plural in nature, and hence the term ‘states’ has been used rather than ‘state’. Later, this concept was not pursued strongly and in 1946 it was accepted as a mere grammatical error. In fact, this resolution was moved as a tool to attain the dream of an independent Muslim state by the All India Muslim League (AIML) leadership in 1940.

In fact, the idea of one Muslim nation in the sub-continent was a flawed concept from the very beginning. Originally, Bengal had had little or no place in Iqbal’s scheme of things. It was only later on in his correspondence with Jinnah, dated June 21, 1937, that the poet-philosopher seemed to have become interested in the Indian Muslim Community (Ahmed 1970). The key visionary of the idea of Pakistan, Chaudhary Rahmat Ali, had also not considered Bengal as a part of Pakistan, referring to Bengal as Bang-e-Islam, and a Muslim majority state separate from his Pakistan. Ali’s view of Pakistan was essentially the same as that in Iqbal’s 1930 address, but with the single addition of Kashmir (Hussain 2000). Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s premise of a ‘two-nation theory’ was that Hindus and Muslims constituted two, distinct, primordial nations and had **exclusivity** at its core. The theory was based on the assumption that the Muslims were a monolithic homogenous group.

In fact, Pakistan had faced a number of **foundational challenges** – as the idea of the ‘two-nation theory’ was fully not a mobilized one. In the United Pakistan, the state had introduced various measures to consolidate its hold over the Bengali Muslims. Initially, the expectations and dilemmas of East Pakistanis were suppressed when Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared Urdu as a state language in 1948. Finally, on 21 February, 1952, the language movement had revived the Bengali cultural nationalistic feelings. Resultantly, the birth of Bangladesh had become an epoch-making event. It arguably negated the ‘two-nation theory’.

While there is widespread support for the idea of democracy in South Asia, there is less commitment towards the institutional form of representative democracy (IDEA 2008). South Asian democracy provides greater room for the struggle towards equality, dignity and human security to all citizens, there is less emphasis on laws and institutions to guard against majoritarian excesses. Growing majoritarian practices undermine the co-existence of diversity and democracy.

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INDIA AS A POST COLONIAL STATE: COMPETING IDEAS OF NATION STATE AND STATE NATION

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Introduction. Post colonial states emerged as a result of rapid decolonisation process that gained pace after the Second World War. The process of decolonisation was not a smooth transition of power, it was marked by complex processes where the new states tried to identify themselves. The search for identity made the new states to look for valid approvals in the system of existing states on the outside and a desire for local acceptance within the state. It is in this process that the new term was coined to identify such states that were struggling to locate themselves – the Post Colonial States.

India as a Post Colonial State. India as a post colonial started decently with all forms of institutions and laws in place that characterise a modern state. The quest to achieve all necessary qualities in terms of being an institutionally robust democracy was seen across the entire country. The leadership wanted to modernise the nation as all post colonial states did. The thrust on development was one defining feature of all post colonial states, the phenomenon of ‘catching up’ was an inspirational source for every post colonial society. In the backdrop of this modernisation the post colonial states took up different ways to develop themselves- Socialist model of development and Liberal model of development with capitalism and market operating as the key forces in the strive towards modernisation.

One of the most defining features of the post colonial states has been explained by Hamza Alavi, a Marxist scholar, who brilliantly explained the process of nation building in such states. The nation states that developed in the post colonial societies were a result of the colonial rule and the instrument of state was a result of a foreign imperialist bourgeoisie (Alavi 1973). The state formation in the post colonial society

absorbs the bureaucracy and other structures from the imperial colonial power. This fact makes it nearly impossible for the native bourgeoisie to establish government mechanisms even after the colonial rule ended. The nature of power transfer rendered the native touch impossible to get to the military bureaucratic circle and institutions of new state. It is the 'hybrid bourgeoisie', who in the due course of time learned the imperialist ways and blended themselves with colonialists while at the same time keeping themselves connected to local masses, that took the reins of power from Imperial colonisers.

The post colonial states take it upon themselves to develop sooner and get into the old of a league of developed or developing states. There is an urgent urge to get rid of the all the rudimentary forces which may keep the state in primordial shackles. One of the foremost tasks that postcolonial states seek to undertake is institutionalisation of capitalist mode of production. Though this was not the case immediately after attaining independence but gradually and ultimately even the socialist countries adopted the market model which was based on production, consumption, demand and supply.

India also took off as a republican democracy with socialist principles. The big businesses were kept by the government to cater to the needs of the masses and recent monopolisation of resources and output in a nascent country. Eventually the need was felt to diversify the socialist profile of the government and allow the market forces to play independently. The opening up of the economy in 1990s and the sheer withdrawal of the state from the market was a colossal event. The economy grew leaps and bounds within years and the socialist aspect of the state was replaced by the welfare aspect of the capitalist state.

Nation State and State Nation. To discuss state, we first need to understand the concept which has been legally defined, internationally accepted. Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention³ notes that 'the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states' (cited in Grotenhuis 2016: 25). State as an entity can be understood in a typical mechanistic manner having institutions as functioning parts and the laws

³ The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States is a treaty signed at Montevideo, Uruguay, on December 26, 1933, during the Seventh International Conference of American States. The Convention codifies the declarative theory of statehood as accepted as part of customary international law.

governing their functioning in an efficient manner as a fuel to run the machine successfully.

On the other hand, a nation is an organic entity, so people associate themselves with the nation hence giving life to an idea and an identity. Nation as an idea and identity can be understood, principally, on the basis of three pillars of human association namely, a) consciousness; b) imagination; c) movement of ideas. A nation gains traction when people are conscious of an idea which makes a group unite and one and aware of the difference between them and others. The idea of 'We' and 'Them' is crucial to understand the nation. The nation is also an imagination of a group where people subscribe to similar beliefs, traditions, customs and language, sometimes religion also becomes a factor. Nation is an evolving concept with certain ideas being added and the existing ideas being dropped or modified to cater to the demands of time, thus making nation a living entity, an idea which is always in flux.

Conclusion: India as Both a State Nation and a Nation State. India attained independence in 1947 and with it inherited a complex society rife with a host of problems; yet people were happy and celebrated the idea of freedom under the flag of India. This idea and the consciousness of people about them belonging to a nation, to an idea which was India, were important to understand the fact that India had been a nation much before it attained independence. The first war of independence, which took place in 1857–1859, was not an isolated event. It was not a success, but it showed the aspirations of people to live under one umbrella, which at that point was known as Bharat/Hindustan and later India.

After 1947, India started with its journey of nation-building and state-building. The state of India was part of the international organisation, the United Nations, and legally India was free to enter into contracts and relations with other states boasting its defined territory and population known as Indians. India witnessed both state formation and nation-building at the same time. The concept of state with several institutions like bureaucracy, legislature-based Westminster model and the judiciary was taken from the English system. The nation-building, on the other hand, addressed the complexities of plurality and diversity, of which India is a proud example today.

The idea of India as it exists, was first imagined by the people and they became conscious of a larger identity to which the entire subcontinent subscribed to. This idea had to evolve from the differences of regional ideas and identities, the heterogenous nature of the post colonial India. It

is in the backdrop of this diversity that nation-building exercise went on along with state-building; hence India witnessed a unique development trajectory which made it both the State Nation and Nation State.

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Part II
DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY VECTORS
ВОПРОСЫ ВНУТРЕННЕЙ И ВНЕШНЕЙ
ПОЛИТИКИ

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INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES
IN SOUTH ASIA

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India's policy in South Asia is a subset of India's *Neighbourhood First* policy. South Asian states are vital to India's interests because of security and developmental reasons. Most of its security threats such as terrorism, border conflicts, insurgency, migration and radicalism emanate from the region. In addition, these states are highly vulnerable to external influences. In the Cold War period, America used to be the external player, and now China has occupied that space. Growing Chinese influence in the region is a major concern for India.

To overcome these concerns, New Delhi has re-activated its *Neighbourhood First* policy, which underlines the following elements: a) regional integration of South Asian states; b) political stability in South Asia; c) physical, energy and digital connectivity in South Asia; d) institutional cooperation through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms; e) people-to-people interaction; and f) stopping China from becoming a dominant player in South Asian politics and security.

New Delhi's ties with South Asian states vary from acute hostility to cordial and big-brotherly relationships. A favourable political regime in Bangladesh has contributed to close ties between the two states. However, New Delhi fears that a change of regime may impact its relationship and Bangladesh may also move closer to China. India has a reasonably

cordial relationship with Sri Lanka which faced a serious economic crisis leading to political turmoil. New Delhi provided generous aid and credit to Sri Lanka amounting to about \$ 3.8 billion. Colombo has responded positively to India’s concerns about Chinese investment in security infrastructure in Hambantota port and Colombo. With Maldives, India had good ties, but the change of regime in 2023 has led to some acrimony between the two states. New Delhi is yet to establish full diplomatic ties with Afghanistan.

Pakistan is a special case and the most difficult neighbour for India. At the moment, there is a ceasefire between the two states, but the chances of a sudden eruption of conflict cannot be ruled out. A terrorist act may change the situation completely. Most of the terrorist organisations working against India are based in Pakistan. India and Pakistan have fought three wars and the Kashmir issue remains unresolved. Given the nature of politics in South Asia, chances of developing cordial ties between the two states are extremely low. Another major concern is that Beijing and Islamabad work together against India. China provides a diplomatic shield to Pakistan and provides defence and infrastructure support. In the short term, there is no scope for improvement of ties between the two states. A prolonged ceasefire and absence of firings between the two armies should be considered a significant achievement.

Trade and Connectivity. India’s total trade in South Asia varies from \$25 to \$36 billion. India’s largest export market in the region is Bangladesh, followed by Sri Lanka and Nepal, whereas the largest imports by value come from Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Table 1 shows India’s trade with the states of South Asia. As is evident, India’s maximum trade is with Bangladesh and the lowest with Pakistan:

Table 1. *India’s Trade with Neighbours in 2022–23*

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India

	Import (billion USD)	Export (billion USD)
Pakistan	.02	.62
Bangladesh	2.0	12.00

Bhutan	.53	1.00
Maldives	.47	0.49
Nepal	.84	8.00
Sri Lanka	1.0	5.00
Afghanistan	.45	.43

Regional Connectivity. Despite shared history and culture, South Asia is one of the least integrated spaces in terms of trade, connectivity and mobility. This region witnesses only 5 percent of intra-regional trade compared to 22 percent in ASEAN and 60 percent in the EU. India is far more integrated with many of the Western states, than it is with South Asia. For instance, it takes 138 hours to move a truck from India to Bangladesh and requires 22 documents and 55 signatures (Dappe and Charles 2021).

New Delhi is gradually seeking to develop closer connectivity projects with Bangladesh and Nepal. Recently, direct rail and road connectivity projects were launched successfully between Kolkata and Dhaka. India and Bangladesh inaugurated 3 major connectivity projects, including a railway line to connect the north-eastern states to the neighbouring country for the first time. The Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link, the Khulna-Mongla port rail line, and Unit II of the Maitree super thermal power plant were jointly launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina in November 2023. India has emerged as Bangladesh’s largest development partner, with a portfolio of almost \$10 billion in the form of grants and concessional loans. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) signed a historic Motor Vehicle Agreement in 2015, but it is yet to be fully implemented.

Since its conception in 2002, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project has faced challenges, including political instability in Myanmar and financial issues. But several stretches of the highway are being completed or nearing completion. The new deadline for its operationalisation is 2027. India, Nepal and Bangladesh are working closely on the integration of the power grid.

Multilateralism. Attempts at political and economic integration have not succeeded. South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has become defunct largely because of hostility and non-cooperation between India and Pakistan, the two dominant states in South Asia. As an alternative, India has sought to promote alternative organisations such as BIMSTEC and BBIN, yet the pace of integration is disappointingly slow.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a multilateral regional organisation established with the aim of cooperation between littoral and adjacent countries in the Bay of Bengal region. Seven countries- five from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand are part of this grouping. However, the ‘sluggish’ pace of BIMSTEC’s progress has impeded integration. The BIMSTEC suffers from inadequate financial and manpower resources required for its operations. Further, it faces the Bangladesh-Myanmar Rohingya refugee crisis, the India-Nepal border issue, and most recently, the political turmoil in Myanmar after the military junta took over in February 2022.

Conclusion. South Asia assumes priority in India’s foreign policy because of its historic, security and developmental concerns. New Delhi has not succeeded in improving its ties with Pakistan, despite several sincere efforts. Therefore, it has sought to develop political and economic ties with other states of the region. There are some positive developments concerning connectivity with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Yet, the process of integration is extremely slow. In contrast, China is pushing hard to make inroads in South Asia. All the countries of South Asia, barring India and Bhutan, are members of China’s BRI project. New Delhi must expedite the process of integration to halt China’s influence in the region. Promoting people-to-people interaction along with connectivity should be central to its strategy in the region.

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DEGLOBALIZATION IN SOUTH ASIA: DECODING RECENT TRENDS

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The process of globalisation reached its peak through market liberalisation, access to cheap labour, international transportation, food consumption, and people's advancement (Figge and Martens 2014). Key indicators of international integration such as direct foreign trade, exports, international trade, and regional trade further demonstrate multi-connectivity (The World Bank 2023; UNCTAD 2021). However, international conflict has raised important questions about the stability of international cooperation, giving rise to concepts such as protectionism, trust, riparianism and good friends (Kathuria 2022; García-Herrero 2018). This creates opportunities for economies where globalisation is still emerging and in the initial stage, especially the South Asian countries.

Contextualising Deglobalisation. Today, the world is entering the fourth phase of globalization, which coincides with the fourth revolution in the economy driven by science and technology (Figge and Martens 2014; García-Herrero 2018; Lee and Park 2020). The third phase involves deepening the global currency to enable low-cost regional production. China took advantage of this opportunity, developed rapidly and entered into a hegemonic struggle with the USA (García-Herrero 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the rules of the game, revealed the fragility of global value chains and led to strategies such as support and peer support to achieve a more stable production environment (Lee and Park 2020; UNCTAD 2021).

The resilience of the world's value chains is seen as impossible, leading to the rise of the virtual world's value chains – an example of the fourth wave of globalisation as the fourth industrial revolution (Lee and Park 2020). It is in this context we understand globalisation and deglobalization are interrelated like two sides of the same coin. Discussing deglobalization requires understanding the concept and

nature of globalisation. Figge and Martens (2014) define globalization as follows: ‘the world as a complex system that develops the connection between politics, economy, society, culture, technology, and cycles’ (Figge and Martens 2014). On the contrary, Kim et al. (2020), define deglobalization as ‘the weakening of the integration and integration of some organizations (mostly nation-states) around the world’. The debate has shifted from the view of the world as a ‘global village’ to the view of moving away from globalisation (Figge and Martens 2014; Kathuria 2022).

South Asian Countries Globalisation Profile. South Asian countries in the Asian subregion have transformed from third-world countries into developing economies and have integrated into the world economy. All countries implemented major reforms in the 1990s, except Sri Lanka, which allowed the flow of capital and trade in 1977. The merger increased international trade and benefited exports in areas such as leather, handicrafts, textiles, and shrimp. India’s service sector is dominated by skilled services and has become a significant contributor to economic growth. Bangladesh became a major textile exporter, especially after independence in 1971 (Kathuria 2022). Other benefits include the growth of tourism in the Maldives and significant foreign remittances from India and Nepal, which contribute positively to GDP, exports, and employment. However, the impact of globalisation on South Asia is complex. Although investment and economic growth have led to employment and new economic growth, challenges include rising incomes and inequality, rising unemployment due to changes in the traditional economy, urban-rural expansion, and environmental degradation. The result of globalisation has disrupted the balance between economic growth and sustainable development.

Challenges in South Asian Countries’ Global Integration. Although they have not yet reached the peak of globalisation, South Asian countries today face the deglobalize trends and to capitalise on these as opportunities there are many domestic and regional challenges such as trade restrictions, low-income economies, incipient globalisation, low-income regional integration, and economic duplication and trade is suspicious and cautious. For instance, Pakistan’s trade-to-GDP ratio peaked at 38% (1996), Bangladesh at 48% (2012), and Sri Lanka at 89% (2000) (Kathuria 2022). By comparison, East Asian countries grew from 88% to 220% of GDP; This shows that access to trade is lower than in South Asia (Kathuria 2022). According to World Bank 2022

data, the poverty rate is 44.8% (2019) and the average economy is at the level of 0.5–1.3 trillion dollars (2019) (The World Bank 2023). This creates difficulties for multinational companies seeking large markets. Furthermore, the degree of regional integration in South Asia is still lower compared to more integrated regions such as Europe and East Asia. In 2020, trade in the region accounted for only 5.8% of total trade; this rate is lower than in East Asia (35.9%) and ASEAN (21.1%) (UNCTAD 2021).

Countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have increased tariffs and made their business less attractive. In India, in 2020, the tariff has increased to 10.6 per cent and the production promotion strategy is designed to encourage domestic production in the country, increase exports, and reduce imports. This shows inefficient political and economic policies, a major challenge for efficient global integration and these challenges has to be addressed to capitalise on the opportunities present in the current de-globalised world order.

Capitalising Opportunities: Decoding Recent Trends of Deglobalization.

De-globalisation and the emergence of the virtual era of international integration have brought an opportunity to South Asian countries (Lee and Park 2020). Although this trend is likely to cause serious economic problems, it can also be translated into opportunities that allow the South Asian region to challenge and lead the West (Baldwin 2018; Bhagwati 2004). Further, move toward the peak of globalisation, and achieve development and better growth while influencing the global economic landscape (Kim et al. 2020; Lee and Park 2020; UNCTAD 2021).

Factors Providing Opportunities for the South Asian Region:

- Supply chain diversification and resilience. Countries around the world are seeking regional integration and regional products. South Asian countries can take advantage of these opportunities to promote regional integration and, thus, promote international integration (Lee and Park 2020).
- Economic nationalism. The rise of economic nationalism around the world is visible in events such as Brexit and the US-China trade. South Asian countries can benefit from a transparent and efficient integration policy (Kathuria 2022).
- Conflicts (war and sanctions). The ongoing war and sanctions among major world power states have broken the integration chains. This opportunity if capitalised can lead to immediate

transformation in South Asian regions. The case of sanctions on Russia by the EU has been more beneficial to India.

- Extreme events (COVID-19). Events like the COVID-19 virus have caused inequality and intensified populism and protective measures in developed markets. However, the already low depth of the South Asian economy's domestic market can capitalise on the opportunities arising from these policies (Lee and Park 2020).

South Asia countries should reduce their tariffs for better global market access, create a trade facilitation environment, increase their participation in the global value chain and attract more investment. Regional value chains should be strengthened. South Asia cannot afford to deglobalize, so with the right policies and visionary strategies, they should mitigate the domestic and regional challenges and capitalise on the opportunities arising from deglobalisation.

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2019 AND 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN INDIA: IS UNITY ENDANGERED BY DIVERSITY?

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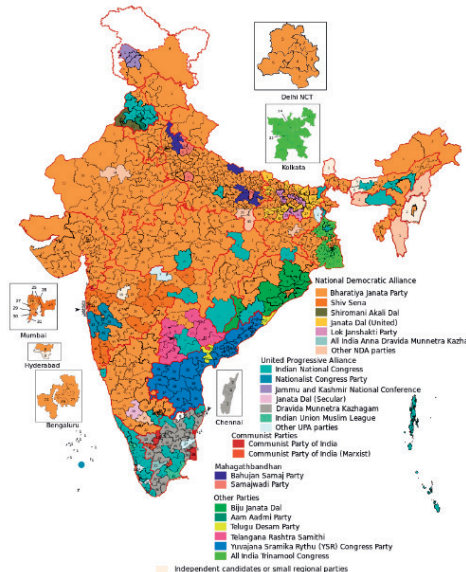
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India's 2019 General Elections resulted in a landslide victory of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – the NDA took 353 out of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, while BJP alone secured 303 seats. Indian National Congress (INC) and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by it performed rather poorly – 51 seats for INC and total 91 seats for UPA.

A glance at the electoral map gives a more detailed picture (Figure 1). NDA's victory was secured mostly in the central and western states of India:

Figure 1. *Assembly Elections Results 2019*

Source: <https://www.mapsofindia.com/election/india-map-parliamentary-2019.jpg>



If compared with the map showing the distribution of major languages of India (Figure 2), we can see that the core base of the NDA (i.e. BJP) lies in Hindi-language states with an addition of such states as Gujarat and Maharashtra (where languages closely related to Hindi are spoken – Gujarati and Marathi respectively), Karnataka (the only Dravidian-language state that voted for the NDA) and some states and territories in the extreme North and North East. Most of the non-Hindi states voted for the opposition – be it INC or local parties.

Figure 2. *Distribution of Major Languages of India*

Source: Joshi, Nakamura & Singh 2017: 46



A look at the regional governments and legislative assemblies provides another perspective for the analysis of the situation prior to General Elections of 2024. About one half of the states and territories that voted ‘orange’ (electoral colour of BJP) in 2019 are governed by BJP or its allies. They are: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra (governed by the local Shiv Sena, which is regarded as BJP’s ally, albeit nominally), Haryana, Uttarakhand.

Some others are governed by the opposition: Delhi (Aam Aadmi Party, AAP), Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh (both – INC), Jharkhand

(regional Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, or Jharkhand Liberation Front). Until recently (regional elections were held in November 2023) Rajasthan was governed by INC, though the elections resulted in a shift of power after BJP won the majority (Sharma 2023).

What do these developments show? First, INC remains the main opposition force, although its influence is waning (that is, to put it mildly). Second, no regional party can challenge BJP on its own. More so, victories on the regional level are not necessarily transformed into electoral success when it comes to general elections. For example, in 2019, AAP already was in power in Delhi, but all the six seats from that Union Territory went to BJP. As I was privately told by a prominent Indian political scientist, AAP is quite good when it deals with electricity, water supplies, public transportation, etc. – whatever lies within its domain as a local government. But when it comes to national politics, other factors take the upper hand.

In July 2023, some 26 oppositional parties formed a so-called ‘Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance’ (I.N.D.I.A.) which was advertised as no less than a ‘challenge to NDA’ (Vikhar 2023). Currently the number of I.N.D.I.A. member parties runs at 27, but the number will certainly change when elections come close. Also, the ‘inclusiveness’ of the alliance is rather doubtful. First, the big question is whether INC is ready to share the authority with smaller parties, and how far the ambitions of the latter will go. Second, of all 27 parties within I.N.D.I.A. only three are regarded as national – INC, AAP and Communist Party of India (Marxist). And out of the three only one (INC) can claim any significant (albeit waning) influence on the national level. Others are small regional parties, some of them demonstrating separatist aspirations even in their names (like Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, or Jharkhand Liberation Front currently ruling in that state). More so, the parties’ political positions range from center-right to far left which will make it difficult to come to a common ground even if they succeed in defeating the NDA in 2024.

India’s experience from the 1980s and 1990s shows that coalition governments tend to be rather fragile and no Prime Minister from a party other than INC or BJP has succeeded in staying in office for more than a year: V.P. Singh’s government lasted for 343 days, while others were even less successful: Chandra Shekhar – 223 days, H.D. Deve Gowda – 324 days, Inder Kumar Gujral – 332 days.

So, even if the opposition alliance succeeds in gaining back power in 2024 general elections, the internal rifts will sooner or later will lead to

inter-party bargaining and may even result in attempts to tear apart the blanket of national unity. And this creates a real threat to the long-standing motto of 'Unity in Diversity', since regional ambitions may prevail over the need to maintain national unity. It should be noted that most of the parties within I.N.D.I.A. are regional ones representing most crucial states, like West Bengal, Tamilnadu, Punjab and others.

Back in the 1980s, India faced a serious challenge from Khalistan supporters but somehow managed to cope with it. Will it be able to repeat the experience if a dozen 'Khalistans' blow up simultaneously in different parts of the country?

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Part III
**ETHNICITY AND RELIGION IN POLITICS:
SUBREGIONAL DIMENSION**
**ЭТНОС И РЕЛИГИЯ В ПОЛИТИКЕ:
СУБРЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЙ РАКУРС**

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**IDENTITY POLITICS IN NEPAL: CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN THE STATE AND PEOPLE**

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Identities as the subject of conversation between the state and the people of Nepal had come to dominate the political landscape from the 1990s onwards, when the county overthrew Panchayat system of governance and adopted constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. The politics in the following years witnessed intra and inter party feuds, conflict between the traditional and the democratic forces. Those who aspired for political role in the new system were disappointed by the rigid party organisations, nepotism and corruption. Most positions in political, economic or social sectors were dominated by the people from dominant communities. It is said that in the last 200 years the dominant communities of Brahmins and Chettris had captured 70 to 80 percent of high-level positions in the political, administrative and military services. These missed opportunities widened the gap between communities or strengthened the perceptions of social discriminations already inherent in the society.

The ensuing atmosphere in the country was one of disappointment amongst the people towards their leaders who had frittered their energies

on political squabbles and failed to govern and deliver. People started questioning the state about the issues on governance, equitable distribution of resources, economic development, and social justice. One of the prominent voices emerged from the Janjaties, indigenous nationalities, of Nepal. They demanded inclusive politics, respect for their ethnic cultures, restructuring of the state by carving districts based on ethnicity. The Janajaties were against the new constitution, 1990, which described Nepal as 'multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom'. Instead, they demanded the constitution to declare Nepal as a secular state. Janjaties challenged the unitary structure of the country and demanded for federalism based on ethnic distinctions. The critiques of the Janjati movement said that in not a single district they had more than 33 percent majority (Thapliyal 2008).

The Government of Nepal responded to the Janjaties' demands by setting up a task force on the Upliftment of Nationalities which recognised that the Janjaties had their distinct culture. In 2002, the government had set up the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities which gave recognition to 61 Janjaties in the country.

In the southern plains of Nepal, the Madheshi movement had risen demanding restructuring of the state based on their identity which was different from the hill people. Madhesh was a geographic identity given to the people living in the plains of Nepal. They demanded 'one madhesh, one pradesh', that is, one province for Madheshi people. This demand rose because of the feeling of discrimination by the hill people. They were hardly represented in the administrative positions or in the armed forces. There were people without citizenship in the plains of Nepal. The Citizenship Act of 1963 deprived citizenship to the Madheshis and made them stateless within their own country. The 1990 constitution also made knowledge of Nepali language mandatory for citizenship. Citizenship certificate was necessary to buy land and get government employment. To acquire citizenship land certificates was necessary. Resultantly, Madheshis were denied both citizenship and land ownership.

The Government tried to respond to some of their demands like increasing electoral constituencies, amending citizenship law to accommodate Madheshis without citizenship rights, inclusion in the police and armed forces etc.

The political dissensions in Nepal led to the rise of the Maoist movement. They declared 'people's war' against the state which lasted

for ten years. Some of their demands coincided with the demands of the Janjaties and Madheshi people and they were able to mainstream their demands.

The socio-political and economic environment of the country gave space to the rise of these movements. Many NGOs and International NGOs had come up in the country representing concerns of Janjaties and other marginalised people. The Government of Nepal recognized nearly 6,000 NGOs, and a total of over 15,000 NGOs were working in various sectors. The rise in foreign aid gave an impetus to the protest movements, civil society and the academic community giving support to them while challenging the state. A glance at the academic writings from Nepal or on Nepal indicates that most of the writers were anthropologists and sociologists working mainly on ethnic identity. Many, if not all, received foreign funded projects. Christian missionaries also played a role in influencing the Janjati movement in their demand for secularism. Economic backwardness of the Janjaties has made them susceptible to the missionary influences.

The media in the country has also been free, active and vibrant. It engaged the state in political dialogue and provided space to various voices. FM stations became a powerful tool in disseminating information regarding political or economic developments in the country. They had better outreach to the local people.

In this conflict between the State and ethno-political movements, the unstable weak governments found it difficult to control them. The unstable politics, socio-economic conditions led the King to dismiss the government, and he took power in his hands on 1 February, 2005. This brought the political parties and the Maoists to join hands against the royal takeover and forced him to step down and reinstate the parliament which removed the King and nationalized his property in its first sitting. A new constitution, written by a constituent assembly, was promulgated in 2015.

Madheshis and Janjaties expected the new constitution to be inclusive and incorporate their demands. Some of the constitutional provisions are influenced by the ethno-political movements such as the provision of voting through proportional representation, apart from first past the post, which gives representation to the marginalized communities. There are commissions specifically set up for the marginalised sections of the society but Madheshis and Janjaties consider it tokenism. Their demand for ethnic federalism or 'one madhesh, one pradesh' remained unfulfilled.

Post new constitution, the ethno-political voices giving credence to identity politics have become silent. They are mute spectators to the unfolding politics in the country. Foreign funding to the marginalized groups and NGOs has dried up due to either global factors like economic recession or pandemic or due to lack of interest on the Nepali issues. Secondly, there is no enthusiasm to study ethnic identities in Nepal. More number of Nepalis are interested to study management, engineering or medical. Thirdly, there is a surge in the Nepali youth going abroad for education or employment. It is reported by the Department of Foreign Employment that 7 lakhs Nepalis had left for employment to other countries in 2023. The constituency to raise ethno-political issues has weakened considerably. Ethnic issues do not play a very significant role in the Nepali politics. The issues have been sidelined for the time being but not disappeared.

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CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN NORTH EAST INDIA

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Introduction / Background. North East India comprises of about 7.7 percent of India's territory and about four percent of its national population. The region comprises of seven states (excluding Sikkim): Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. What is striking about the region is its extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. Historically, the region has been an area of continuous civilizational intermingling that has resulted in a complex transition zone of linguistic, racial and religious streams. The region was also a 'gateway of commerce and culture' that linked India overland to East and Southeast Asia.

North East India's first encounter with British colonialism began in the year 1826 with the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo, after the defeat and surrender of the Burmese rebels to the British troops. Thereafter the historical 'connectedness' of the region was systemically undermined through extraordinary administrative policies of progressive segregation that were put in place to administer the region between 1873–1934. These policies led to the progressive segregation of the tribal populations who today comprise nearly 30 percent of the population of the region and are widely dispersed. These isolationist policies continued even in post-independent India with the declared objective of securing the interests of the tribal population against the exploitation by outsiders. The cumulative impact of these policies was an ever deepening of fissures between the tribal and non-tribal population.

The partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 was another important development that proved to be a huge disaster for North East India. It resulted in the complete collapse of the communication lifeline of the entire North East frontier that included inland water, road and railway communications. The end result was the isolation of North East India and consequently in the popular imagination, North East India

became a distant periphery. The partition had yet another affect on the region. It resulted in the unending waves of unwanted migration, mainly economic migrants, from the neighbourhood into the North East Indian states – a phenomenon that continues to disturb the existing demographic equations in the region and is an important factor in the conflict dynamics of North East India.

Conflict in North East India. With 99 percent of the borders of North East India being international borders, the region's geo-strategic significance clearly stands out. This region (as a conglomerate of distinct political units) is placed between what is now Bangladesh, Tibet, Burma and Bhutan. A thin land corridor known as the Siliguri Corridor or the 'chicken's neck' connects it with the rest of India. These borders have been involved in at least three major wars in 1962, 1965, and 1971. The 1971 war resulted in the creation of a new political entity i.e. the sovereign state of Bangladesh.

North East India is inhabited by three distinct groups of people — the hill tribes, the plain tribes and the non-tribal population of the plains. As in most fractured parts of the world, perceived discrimination along economic, political and cultural lines have triggered scores of insurgencies across the landscape of North East India. Aggressive engagement with the politics of identity characterises newly every state of the region. The phenomenon is a dynamic process in which contesting ethnic groups with seemingly different ethno-ideological and value structure strive to consolidate their identities and promote their material interests from the invalidating behaviour of other groups. The ensuing inter-ethnic competition is primarily a 'struggle for power' between groups that control power and its institutions and others aspiring to seek similar position. The agenda aggressively pushed forward are mainly three: political independence or autonomy, economic liberation and the preservation of 'cultural identity'.

It is noteworthy that within the umbrella of the larger conflict, there persists struggles at several levels. Violence plays a vital part in fanning and sustaining these struggles by polarising communities in more ways than one. The classic 'security dilemma' is a defining feature of the conflict situation in most ethnically polarised societies. North East India is no exception. The arming of one ethnic group provokes the rival groups to make similar security arrangements, which paradoxically triggers an escalation and consequently the language of terrorism becomes the accepted grammar of politics. In regard to the

conflict dynamics in India's North East, certain specificities are worth noting: (i) most states in the region have experienced long drawn violent uprisings seeking either secession from the Indian Union or greater autonomy within the Union; (ii) conflict in some manifestation is visible in each state of the region. The conflicts are of various kinds ranging from discord between constituent states and the Central Government to disputes among the constituent states themselves over resources or over border issues. Besides these, there are conflicts between one tribe and another, between tribal and non-tribal groups, between indigenous groups and 'outsiders' who have moved in from other parts of India and from neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal. These conflicts also have some defining features: they mainly tend to be asymmetrical; they are ambiguous in character and hence complicate differentiations between friends and foes; they are fought unconventionally using political and psychological methods; and several of these conflicts have got transformed into protracted wars of attrition.

In the context of the ongoing ethnic strife in the state of Manipur, the tribal dimension of the North Eastern socio-political landscape has to be understood and contextualized. The flash point is innately associated with the issue of tribal claims and aspiration, the disproportionate land holdings between different tribal groups, the issue of migration from the hill to the valley and vice-versa, the easy availability of arms through the porous international borders, the drug trade, the overlapping territorial claims by various militant organisations and most significantly the weaponisation of ethnic identity. Closely connected is the emotive issue of cross-border population movement that brings to the centerstage the constitutional rights of citizens and also matters pertaining to the preservation of language and cultural rights of the indigenous population. It also accords centrality to the issue of human rights, as a critical factor in the ongoing political discourses in the region. It is significant that in the ethnically fractured polity of North East India, the discourse on human rights assumes special meaning. Social boundaries unlike political boundaries are believed to be sacrosanct and for most ethnic groups, the right to live in their own community is a right far superior to other rights.

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HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM IN NAGPUR: A HISTORY OF COEXISTENCE IN THE URBAN SPACE

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People's lives take place in space. Practices of their everyday existence, including the religious ones, become most noticeable and, therefore, socially significant in places of the accumulation of people, such as cities. Religious traditions can be supported and affirmed by regular performative practices that fill the space with visual-kinesthetic activities of people, but at the same time boast a transient / temporary nature. They can also be fixed in specific recognizable material objects, which – being constantly in the sight of residents, spectators and passers-by – transmit certain ideals, ideas, values, and codes of conduct. By marking territories with 'own' objects and inscribing them into city landscapes, people record the significance of their views and their presence in the public sphere. Therefore, living traditions that remain relevant and actual do not stop increasing their cultural thickness by means of introduction of more and more new artifacts and practices into surrounding space. This paper focusses not on the essence of socio-religious traditions and movements, but on their materialization and placement in a city space.

Such a city is Nagpur, the geographical center of India, where two events took place in the 20th century. First, on September 27, 1925, there was founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteers Association, RSS), a right-wing Hindu nationalist, paramilitary, volunteer, and allegedly militant organization preaching the ideology of consolidating Indian society based on a unified version of Hinduism (Figure 1). It was created by a Maratha Brahmin Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889–1940) on the anniversary of riots at a local mosque in 1923 provoked by an attack by a Muslim mob on a procession of Hindus who were unable to defend themselves. By 1927, the RSS acquired para-

military units of volunteers and during the next skirmish with Muslims repulsed them, which was followed by the flight of Muslims from Nagpur.

Figure 1. *RSS Meeting in 1939*

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/RSS_meeting_1939.jpg



The second event occurred on October 14, 1956, when the largest religious conversion ceremony in human history took place. On that day, Bhim Rav Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) along with several hundred thousand Dalits and low-caste people embraced Buddhism. Essentially, the religious action was a form of social protest against the caste structure of the society, according to which the untouchables, who by birth found themselves outside the four-varna system, were ritually considered outcasts. However, even before that event, the movement for the Dalits' rights acquired a great scope in Nagpur and was represented by a number of well-known public figures, press media and organizations; among the latter most active was the Samta Sainik Dal (Army for Social equality, SSD) (Kshirasagara 1994). It was founded in 1927 in Bombay to protect the participants of the campaign concerning the Chowdar Tank well, from which Dalits were not allowed to draw water, from aggressive actions of the caste Hindus. The branch of SSD appeared in Nagpur in 1938 (Figure 2). Being a semi-military public organization with strict internal discipline, it united Dalits represented in Maharashtra and Nagpur mainly by Mahars who were in favour of Ambedkar's principles.

Figure 2. *National Level Conference of All India Samta Sainik Dal Held in Maharashtra, 1942*

Source: <https://aissd.org/originalsofaissd/>



In case of both the SSD and RSS, the ideas promoted by their leaders received strong support from the grassroots, and both organizations were similar in form and structure.

For the time being, RSS and SSD were not antagonists. During the struggle for independence, members of both organizations distanced themselves from Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress and in every possible way avoided associating their organization with the anti-British movement. In 1942, the RSS and the SSD jointly opposed Gandhi's *Quit India* campaign and tried to stay away from it. Before setting up the SSD Nagpur branch in 1938, Nagpur Dalits often were members of the RSS. And when the SSD was established in Nagpur, members of both organizations were engaged in physical training and military drills at the same Gita Ground field in Nagpur. However, this unity could not last long, since the ideas of the RSS upholding traditional Hindu values, an integral element of which was the caste system, ran counter to the ideals of the Dalits who also had good relations with the Muslims still remaining in the city. First, members of the RSS and SSD began to have daily clashes at the training field, which forced the division of that site into two parts – the western one for the RSS members, and the eastern one for the SSD. By 1946, the conflict spilled onto the streets of

Nagpur, where clashes began between the caste Hindus and the Mahars (Moon 2000: 64, 73, 90).

Therefore, when Ambedkar decided to hold the conversion ceremony in Nagpur in 1956, some believed that he did it to spite the RSS, although Ambedkar himself denied such a motive. He said: ‘Many people ask me why Nagpur was decided upon for this work. Why didn’t the conversion take place in some other city? Some people say that because the great battallion of the R.S.S. was here in Nagpur, we took the meeting to this city in order to lay them flat. This is completely untrue. This program was not brought here to Nagpur because of that. Our work is so great that even one minute in a lifetime cannot be wasted. I don’t have enough time to make an ill omen for others by scratching my nose!’ (Ambedkar 1956).

Less than two months after the ceremony, Ambedkar passed away on December 6, 1956. By that point, the active participation of the Nagpur Mahars in the movement for Dalit rights, combined with their demonstrated commitment to the ideas of neo-Buddhism, including the preparation and holding of a key event to convert half a million untouchables to the new faith, had allowed Nagpur to establish itself as an important locus of the emerging Buddhist tradition. However, to maintain such a status, the city lacked visible and tangible symbols around which various practices could be concentrated; it lacked a materialized framework on which the cultural thickness of tradition could be built up. While the representatives of the traditional ancient faith, Hinduism, had no shortage of religious buildings and other material artifacts in the city space, the newly converted Buddhists had nothing of their own. When crowds of people left the conversion ground, the place remained an abandoned city wasteland. Acquisition of the material framework of the new tradition began in 1978 when the construction of the Buddhist stupa Dikshabhoomi began at the 1956 conversion place. Its grand inauguration took place in December 2001 (Figure 3). It was built to resemble the ancient stupa in Sanchi (III century BC), which in turn was erected, it is believed, on behalf of Emperor Ashoka. The Nagpur stupa is one of the largest in the world; it is the largest hollow stupa, too.

Having received such a grand structure, the city became a place attracting streams of pilgrims. Every year millions of Ambedkar’s followers visit Dikshabhoomi, but the largest crowds assemble on October 14th. Unlike ancient historical stupas, the Nagpur building is not closed off: it is not only part of the city architecture, but also a participant in the city life; therefore, it is subject to change. A new statue of Ashoka

(Figure 4) has been installed inside quite recently. Moreover, many new stupas and Buddhist places spring up around Nagpur every year.

Figure 3. *Dikshabhoomi
in Nagpur*
(author's image)



Figure 4. *Ashoka's Statue
in Dikshabhoomi*
(author's image)



The enrichment and saturation of religious traditions with new ideas and meanings are not limited to the field of religion but are based on a broader current socio-political agenda; they are formulated by public opinion leaders, live people who initiate various events and forms of social activism boasting not a mythological, but a historical dimension. Consequently, the consolidation of their ideas and values in urban space often takes the form of an object located at the intersection of the religious and the profane.

Thus, the premises of the Nagpur Stupa are a symbiosis of secular and religious spaces embodied in a combination of a modern museum represented by a gallery of photographs depicting the earthly life and merits of Ambedkar, and a place for storing and worshiping his ashes, which has acquired a sacred relic character. Simultaneously with the

Nagpur Stupa construction, the Ambedkar Shantivan Memorial Museum was conceived; it has recently been inaugurated at an 11-acre site in the vicinity of Nagpur. The museum also houses a portion of Ambedkar's ashes along with almost a thousand items that were in Ambedkar's personal use (suits, ties, shoes, socks, typewriters, stoves, chairs, shaving kits, etc.).

In this regard, RSS activists do not lag behind and design their own memorial sites. The RSS central premises at Reshimbagh in Nagpur host a museum dedicated to the history of the RSS and its founder Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. In 1962, the Smriti Mandir was built there over Hedgewar's *samadhi*. The site is not a *mandir* (temple) in the proper sense of the word: it is a significant symbolic place attracting millions of people from all over India who flock there to pay their respect to the RSS founder's memory. The site was granted tourism status in 2017.

Recently, another memorable place has been restored in Nagpur: the house in the Mahal area of Nagpur where Hedgewar was born and where the first meeting of RSS members was held has also become a museum (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Birthplace of Keshav Baliram Hedgewar
(author's image)



The emerging objects (religious buildings, museums, statues, images) grow into the fabric/infrastructure of the city becoming places of attraction for people who get an opportunity to express one or another point of view or identify with the values associated with particular objects. In fact, the

XXI-century problems of India's society are not so much of a religious, but of a social nature, which only acquires new facets and does not allow such objects (and artefacts stored in them) to remain exclusively cultural or historical monuments: they become active participants in city life evolving into current nodes of socio-political activities. Studying how ideas and values marked by religion but featuring a substantially broader socio-political significance are settled in urban space helps us understand the way socio-political processes, trends and/or conflicts are organized and exercised at the grassroots, philistine and everyday level.

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INTERPLAY OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS FACTORS IN SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF PAKISTAN'S PUNJABI COMMUNITY⁴

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Mother tongue is considered to be a major marker of belonging to a particular ethnic or national group. Nowadays some scholars argue that many ethnic minorities in Europe have been losing their language but this does not automatically imply the loss of ethnic identity (Schmidt 2008: 2–15). This paper describes a situation when the mother tongue of a privileged and numerically dominant group has no institutional support in a country: in focus is the sociolinguistic status of the Punjabi language in Pakistan.

The Punjabi-speaking community constitutes 38.78 percent of the total population of Pakistan. Together with speakers of Saraiki (12.19 percent), which is treated by many linguists as a southern dialect of Punjabi, the native speakers of the Punjabi language represent a majority of the population of Pakistan. Urdu, the national language of the country, is the mother tongue for only 7.08 percent of the entire population of Pakistan (Languages of Pakistan 2017). The Punjabi community implies all the features that are usually treated as constituting ethnicity: a shared territory, history, geography and cultural roots. The earliest poetic treatises created in Western Punjabi belong to the XVth century while the earliest available prose works, to the XVII century (McLeod 1975: 24). In contemporary Pakistan, the Punjabi-speaking community includes the influential class of rich Punjabi landlords and the largest educated middle class, which provides most of the white-collar personnel and represents a pool for recruitment in civil and military service.

However, all cultural, intellectual or professional activity of the community takes place either in Urdu or in English. With an exception

⁴ This paper partially draws from an earlier article (Khokhlova 2014).

of a number of Punjabi films and short TV and radio programs Punjabi is almost absent in mass media, and completely absent in government services. One can do an MA or a PhD in the University of the Punjab in Lahore, but it can hardly serve the cause of preserving the literary tradition of the Punjabi community.

There exists a rather convincing theory that the development of trade and capitalist economic relations expedited the awakening of national consciousness in the coastal regions of South Asia like, for example, Gujarat and Bengal. As for Central India – such regions as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab etc. – religion-based self-identification for a long time remained more important for the local population than for national consciousness (Brass 1974).

Education in English has brought about new ideas of democracy, human rights, and individualism. Paradoxically, the democratic reforms in India have only strengthened the religious consolidation of its population. The Britishers used to pursue communal policies supporting different religious communities at different times (Singh 1979: 585–693). Through the 1909 Minto-Morley reform the British rulers enlarged the sphere of Indian participation in the Government. As a result, the communities started competing in order to increase their representation in central and local administrative bodies. The idea that Urdu was the language of Muslims while Hindi ‘belonged’ to Hindus, and Punjabi to Sikhs, gradually got rooted in India’s society.

Pakistan was created according to the basic principle followed by its founders: ‘One Nation, One Religion, One Language, One State’. The attitude towards the national language taken up by two largest ethnic groups of Pakistan, the Bengalis and Punjabis, was absolutely different: united by their common language and common culture, the Bengalis launched a campaign against Urdu, but Pakistan’s government put it down. The suppression of the Bengali language ignited in its speakers a feeling of political and economic deprivation, which resulted in the formation of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh in 1971.

The speakers of Punjabi formed a coalition with Mohajirs – the speakers of Urdu, who had migrated to West Pakistan from India during the 1947 Partition and settled in the urban centers of the province of Sind. They actively supported Urdu as a symbol of religious unity in the country. Urdu as a symbol of religious, political and cultural unity was primarily propagated by the ruling elite consisting of feudal lords, ruling party politicians, bureaucrats and military officers. They were opposed by

middle class intellectuals who insisted on widening the social functions of their mother tongue. Nevertheless, there were no serious large-scale ethnic movements of Punjabis to back the protesters.

The discrimination of the majority language of Pakistan may also be explained by cultural reasons: the term ‘culture’ in Pakistan has always meant ‘Islamic culture’ (Rahman 2004: 327–346). One of the main reasons for the low esteem of the Punjabi language is – however paradoxically it might sound – the high economic and political status of the Punjabi community in contemporary Pakistan. Language movements in contemporary South Asia are absolutely different from what may be observed in seemingly parallel historical processes of the national development in Europe. In almost every European country the rising bourgeoisie first of all made efforts to standardize and promote its mother tongue, to convert it into the main means of communication at all levels and through this to facilitate the functioning of their own language as one of the most important tools of nation building. The contemporary era of globalization has created a new tendency in such processes: nowadays, ethnic groups usually launch language movements when they feel economically and/or politically and/or culturally depressed thus hoping to gain some privileges as a result of such campaigns.

Despite the fact that the role of Punjabi in Pakistan is limited to informal oral communication and no importance is given to widening its social functions, the Punjabi language – according to the opinion of the native speakers I have interviewed – remains an integral part of the process of self-identification: not being able to speak Punjabi actually means to be an alien person. However, the number of Punjabi speakers slowly decreases: 48.17 percent in 1981 compared to 38.78 percent in 2017 (Languages of Pakistan 2017). Thus, the question arises: how long can a language serve as a reliable means of ethnic self-identification when it is not used as a means of expressing social and intellectual demands of its speakers and plays just a limited role in the speech repertoire of the educated strata of the society?

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NON-HINDI-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES OF DELHI: PROBLEMS OF ADAPTATION IN A MODERN METROPOLIS

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People from Hindi-speaking regions of India together with the Punjabi community make up a vast majority of Delhi's population. Groups native to Southern and Eastern regions represent a small minority of the capital's residents. They started to settle in the city in the XXth century when Delhi received the status of India's capital. Nevertheless, these communities play a fairly significant role in the city life due to their high educational and economic level.

Bengalis form one of the largest non-Hindi-speaking communities. According to the 2011 Census, Bengali-speaking residents number 213 thousand (1.3 percent of the capital's population). During the colonial period, natives of Bengal played a major role in bureaucratic and technological fields. Bengali-speaking railway and postal employees appeared in Delhi after 1911. But the largest number of Bengalis arrived to Delhi after the events of 1947. Over 2.6 mln people left East Bengal after it became part of Pakistan. Most of them settled in West Bengal, but many former colonial officials went to Delhi, and since then Bengalis have become quite visible in the capital. In 1954, the East Pakistan Displaced Persons Association was formed, which was patronized by high-ranking Bengalis of Delhi. In 1968, the Association requested the government to allocate land for construction. In South Delhi, the East Pakistan Displaced Persons Colony (EPDPC) was established later named after Chittaranjan Das, a prominent politician of the early XXth century, a native of the Eastern part of Bengal (Chatterjee 2022: 23).

By the beginning of the XXst century, the Chittaranjan Park neighborhood became the center of Bengali culture in the capital. The Bengal Colony Market is famous among other Delhiites, primarily for its traditional Bengali cuisine.

The Tamil-speaking and Malayali-speaking communities are much smaller: they are represented by 82 thousand and 88 thousand residents, respectively. South Indians appeared in the city in the second half of the XXth century. Their status in the city has been similar to that of the Bengali community: they include a high proportion of government employees and educated professionals, especially in the medical field. South Indian communities also cluster around their traditional areas. It is Rama Krishna Puram for Tamils, and Mayur Vihar on the eastern bank of the Yamuna for Malayalis.

In addition to the Bengalis and natives of South India, there is a large number of smaller communities in Delhi. People from the northeastern states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Meghalaya stand apart. Those are relatively sparsely populated areas with weak economic ties to the Delhi region. Basically, natives of the North East come to Delhi either to study in urban higher educational institutions (primarily in JNU) or to work in federal government agencies. Several thousand representatives of northeastern peoples live in Delhi, mostly in the Humayunpur district near the Jawaharlal Nehru University. The work of state representative offices (primarily, those of Nagaland) is most important for them.

Bengalis and South Indians do not assimilate with the Hindi-speaking majority and maintain ties with their states. Autonomous ethnolinguistic communities can successfully survive in the capital: a good example is Delhi's Tibetan community.

The first Tibetans arrived in Delhi by 1959. The main place of concentration of refugees in the early stages was the Ladakh Buddh Vihar in the city center. Before 1962 the number of Tibetans in Delhi was extremely small. The massive influx of refugees occurred during the Sino-Indian war of 1962: fearing an invasion by the Chinese army, a significant number of Tibetans fled to Delhi from the refugee camps near the border.

The largest Tibetan camp is located in North Delhi along the banks of the Yamuna river, near the Majnu-ka-Tilla gurdwara – one of the first Sikh shrines in Delhi associated with the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Hargobind. The official status of the Tibetan settlement in Majnu-ka-Tilla (New Aruna Nagar Colony; Tibetan name is Samyeling) has not been determined. From the point of view of the 'Tibetan government' in Dharamsala, the area is inhabited by citizens of the independent Tibet. From the point of view of India's government, the area is inhabited by stateless persons who are staying in Delhi until the hypothetical resolution of the Tibetan problem.

According to the information of the Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration, by the year of 2000, some 378 Tibetan families

lived in Delhi with a total number of about 2,500 residents (Klieger 2022: 141). In addition, some Tibetans live in the Ladakh Vihar or even outside the ‘Tibetan’ areas. The number of Delhi’s Tibetan population also varies during the year, since seasonal migration from refugee camps is an important component of the economic life of the community.

The active work of non-Hindi-speaking communities is associated with setting up and maintaining their own educational systems. Bengali schools in Delhi are run by the Chittaranjan Das Educational Society. The capital also hosts the Tamil Educational Association and several Malayalam-teaching schools. Religious life plays an important role in the ethnic consolidation of the minorities. One religious center of the southern diaspora is the Malai Mandir – a temple, which unites Tamil, Malayali and Telugu communities. Bengalis’ religious life centers around the Kali Temple in the Chittaranjan Park. The central event in the life of the Bengali community is the Durga Puja festival, which has been held in Delhi since the beginning of the XXth century. The Tibetan Buddhist community has its own temple at Majnu-ka-Tilla. As for the northeastern communities, their religious activity is determined by their affiliation with various Protestant churches (McDuie-Ra 2012: 159).

Both Bengalis and South Indians come from regions where the political situation differs a lot in comparison to Delhi and is not determined by the struggle of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress. However, regional political parties do not demonstrate any serious activity in the capital. The West Bengal Trinamool Congress has several times tried to field candidates in the city elections, but has not shown much success. Other regional political parties are visible only within the framework of the activities of their factions in the Lok Sabha. During the city elections non-Hindi-speaking minorities tend to support the Indian National Congress and, in recent years, the Aam Admi Party.

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SUFI INSTITUTIONS IN INDIAN POLITICS: A CASE OF TELANGANA⁵

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Sufism has had a well-established presence and broad popular support in Central India (particularly within the areas of modern-day Telangana) since the early Middle Ages. However, the involvement of Sufi institutions in politics, with the exception of the Bahmani Sultanate period (1347–1518), has remained limited – mostly due to these organizations’ consciously adopted approach. When such involvement does take place, it follows a certain pattern, which this paper seeks to specify.

For the purpose of the study, Sufi institutions of Telangana can be divided into two broad categories. The first one includes society-oriented institutions, which work with the population at the grass-roots level, aiming to provide different types of support and respite: *dargāhs* (shrines), *āstānahs* (community centers), *khānqāhs* (boarding houses), *langarkhānahs* (soup kitchens) and various coaching centers offering wide range of Sufi courses and tuition classes.

While all these institutions are active in the present-day Deccan, *dargāhs* play a central role, that of a nucleus around which other structures have been developed. There are over two hundred *dargāhs* in Telangana (with at least 81 in Hyderabad alone) (Naniseti 2018). Hereditary keepers of *dargāhs* – *sajjādah našīns* – simultaneously serve as leaders for a cluster of Sufi institutions associated with their *dargāh*. Due to non-political nature of their personal authority (which is based on their descendance from a certain *pīr*), they tend to avoid any association with ‘Muslim politics’ preferring instead the role of promoters of inter-faith harmony.

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The above-mentioned *dargāh*-oriented structures, despite their non-political aims, are very appealing to politicians, since they have a potential to mobilize a considerable amount of people on short notice. Given the fact that Telangana *dargāhs* present themselves as primarily spiritual institutions that a person of any religion can visit, it has become a common practice for local politicians of the whole spectrum to visit *dargāhs* during election periods (*Times of India*. 28.03.2009).

The second category of Sufi institutions in Telangana are those state-oriented – aiming at providing dialog between the Sufi nomenclature on the one side and federal and local authorities on the other. This primarily implies broadcasting Sufi views on touching matters – both social and political. Multiple organizations of this kind exist in the form of associations, societies, forums or councils. One example is the All India Sufi Sajjadanashin Council, the Telangana branch of which is rather active at promoting *sajjādah našīns'* interests on state as well as federal levels (Moin 2019).

However, a majority of such organizations are not tied to a specific *dargāh* (or a group of *dargāhs*) and are centered around a certain *tarīqah* (Sufi order). The most popular in Telangana are *Čīšū* and *Qādiriyah tarīqahs*, the offshoots of which are, respectively, All India Markazi Majlis-e-Chistia (AIMMC) and Qadria International Organisation (QIO).

Similar to *dargāhs*, they are led by the descendants of a certain *pīr* (rarely by *sajjādah našīn* directly, but by the members of the same extended family).

They deal with social issues as well; but – being more fluid in their activities than *dargāh*-related institutions – *tarīqah*-centered structures focus on raising awareness, organizing rallies and campaigning for certain causes.

They do not get involved in the political process directly by means of elections; rather, they make Sufi opinions on various matters vocal through conferences, forums and media activities. By doing so they create and promote the Sufi image that is transmitted upwards: to social and political elites. This image is used as a point of reference by authorities when formulating their views of, and policy towards, Sufi discourse.

Over the last decades, the most characteristic feature of this Telangana Sufi's self-portrait has been all-encompassing religious tolerance. Both AIMMC and QIO hold various festivals and celebrations where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs take part together – like Basant Panchami

(Venkateshwarlu 2016). Remarkably, Sufi organizations of Hyderabad agreed to cancel the celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birthday when it fell on the same day as Ganesh festival – 'to maintain peace in the city' (*Telangana Today*. 10.09.2023).

Both society-oriented and state-oriented Sufi institutions in Telangana for the most part abstain from direct participation in politics, preferring to remain 'above the battle'. Citing the tradition of maintaining distance from power, Sufi structures avoid the role of intermediaries between those in power and the masses (Zafar, Anas 2016). Instead, they deal with these entities separately, serving not as a channel but rather as a buffer between them. By alleviating social disparity and pre-empting communalism, they prevent discontent with the authorities among vulnerable groups of population; by projecting an appropriate image of 'a common Sufi' upwards, they built up government's loyalty towards adherents of Sufism. Such approach, however, does not obviate the fact that there exists a big vote bank within Sufi community; it makes Sufi institutions potentially strong players within parliamentary structures as well as invaluable allies for existing political parties.

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**INDIA-RUSSIA: PERSPECTIVES
IN SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES
ИНДИЯ–РОССИЯ: ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ
ЮЖНОАЗИАТСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ**

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**THE MUGHALS AND THE RURIKIDS/ROMANOV:
A COMPARISON OF TWO MODELS
OF IMPERIAL INTEGRATION**

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The Mughal Empire in India and the empire of the late Rurikids and early Romanovs emerged approximately at the same time as late medieval / early modern empires in conformity with the specific common ‘rhythm’ discovered for Eurasian states by Victor Lieberman (Lieberman 2009: 55, 57, 96, 125). The comparison between the two discloses a number of similarities as well as differences. In the Russian case, the Romanov dynasty which came to power in 1613, after the bloody turmoil known as the Time of Trouble, claimed full continuity with the Rurikid predecessors, and kin relationship (far as it had been) with the first wife of Ivan the Terrible, played a significant, although not a decisive role, in the selection of the new monarch. The Mughals came to India as outside invaders who emphasized their descent from Tamerlane and initially built their empire as a continuation of the Timurid one (Balabanlilar 2012); at the same time, as their official historiography suggests, they viewed themselves as the continuers from not only their Islamic predecessor, the Delhi Sultanate, but the earlier medieval Hindu rulers as well.

Both empires had a common feature of being multi-ethnic and multi-confessional and, more importantly as a rare phenomenon in world history,

as having supra-communal ruling and military-administrative elites. It is well known how the Mughals not only entered marital relations with the Rajput princely families, but promoted Rajputs for high administrative and military posts like province governors and army commanders. The late Rurikids and Romanovs also accommodated the elites of the non-Russian peoples included into the empire: Muslim or Buddhist persuasion were no bar for being officially included into the ranks of the Russian gentry and holding high military and administrative positions, so that many members of the Russian aristocracy had surnames like Yusupov. Among the common features of the two, one may safely mention the process of transformation of loose early feudal conglomerates to the centralized states with a fixed administrative structure, with provinces not coinciding territorially with feudal domains, bureaucratic system, power hierarchy, etc.

The Mughal and the Rurikid /Romanov empires were also comparable by the process of rapid expansion. The latter expanded first to the West and North, then East and then steadily to the South. Under Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), the Mughal empire reached its territorial maximum: by the early eighteenth century, it comprised a space of 3.2 million sq. km with the population estimated between 100 and 150 million (Richards 1995: 1). By the end of Aurangzeb's reign, the distance between the empire's northern and southern frontiers (conventional as they were) comprised around 2,826 km, a huge one for the transportation and communication capacities of that epoch. Alas, after Aurangzeb, the avalanche-like disintegration of the empire began, including not just princely states (some of them remained loyal to Mughals to the end), but the core of the imperial territory. 32 years after Aurangzeb the Mughals controlled only the Doab and even that not fully.

The reasons for this failure have been known to scholars, but it makes sense to view the process of the Mughal expansion as the 'overstretching' and finally 'tearing off' the territorial 'fabric' of the empire. However, the Russian empire, by the death of its first emperor, Peter I, in 1725, stretched from west to east across Eurasia, from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean (more than 11,000 km in width); from north to south (Archangelsk to Azov) it was 2,364 km. Nevertheless, the Russian empire started its eastward growth in the late sixteenth century, when unification and centralization had almost been completed for its core area. This core comprised of the lands inhabited, and quite densely, in comparison with Siberia, by ethnic Russians, who had developed, throughout the centuries,

an idea of ‘Russian land’, and other peoples who had long lived in union with the latter. Only after the core area proved to be strong enough, Russia began to expand, first eastwards, then westwards and southwards, and the conquests were necessarily followed by the influx of Russian settlers to the newly conquered and sparsely populated lands, by building cities and forts, and by integrating native elites. It was like adding new storeys to a building already constructed on a solid foundation and having strong walls.

The Mughal empire under Akbar (r. 1556–1605) with its southern border being in Asir (North Maharashtra) evolved towards a centralized state, based primarily upon the Indian North with the areas now known as the ‘Hindi belt’ plus the regions where variants of Hindi had been well understood. But it was only a process, rather far from completion, and, unfortunately, the Mughal state was destined to lack historical time for it. While the centralization of the state and integration of elites in a territory that belonged, geographically and culturally, to the Indian North, had been still incomplete, the Mughals rushed to the densely populated Deccan where they had to deal with not just hostile, but culturally alien elites, both Hindu and Muslim (Stewart 1993: 79). I may suggest that if Mughal conquest of the Deccan could have started after the formation of the centralized state in its northern core, then the new territories could have been added to a stable and solid nucleus. This, under favourable conditions, could have facilitated the survival and development of the empire, as it happened, for example, in Russia.

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ETHNONATIONALISM AND POLITICS IN SOUTH INDIA: ISSUES IN RUSSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY⁶

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For almost ten years, one of Russia's leading historical institutes, namely, the History and Archives Institute of the Russian State University for the Humanities, has been organizing an annual conference on historiography and history of science titled *The Future of Our Past*. It is a very relevant ongoing forum dealing with Russia's history and historical studies, and its title seems most appropriate and compelling nowadays. It can be used it as an epigraph for this paper focused on aspects of Russian historiography in the field of Indian studies.

Since January 2023, I have been part of a two-year project titled 'Ethnonationalism in the Republic of India: Regional Autonomy Tendencies (Telangana/Andhra, Punjab) and the Federal Government Policy' supported by the Russian Science Foundation (RSF). Our team started the research with historiography trying to evaluate what had already been done in the field both by Soviet/Russian and foreign scholars. The primary focus has been South India in connection with Andhra as in our country, there have never been many scholars doing social history and politics of that region.

This theme is closely connected to the field of regional studies. It is common knowledge that studying India as a country composed of diverse regions and diverse cultures has been a relatively new trend in Russia's Indology (Bochkovskaya 2021). Before the 1990s, Soviet scholars used to focus on basic tendencies in India's history, politics, economics, culture, and on related personalities. Issues pertaining to India within the broadest theoretical context of world history studies were also among those widely

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discussed in the USSR. Specific regions, states or territories were mostly explored not by historians, economists or political science experts, but by philologists – through the study of languages and literatures of large ethnic communities, especially in the South, North-West and East of India. To this end, evident attention of Soviet/Russian philologists has been given to Bengal, Punjab and – in the south – to Tamilnadu.

In the field of Tamil studies, the credit is of course due to Prof Alexander Dubiansky (1941–2020) who was the founder of a scholarly tradition related to South India. It dealt basically with literature and culture in general. Another name that should be mentioned in connection with South India is Professor Leonid Alayev, a patriarch of our Indology, who studied rural communities in India throughout his life. He departed from South Indian studies in the 1960s with his first book on the social and economic history of South India in the XIV–XVIIIth centuries, and after several decades came back to the same region with the book titled *South India: Communal and Political System VI–XIII cc.* (Alayev 2011). The book was published twice, with first edition in 2011 followed by the next one in 2018.

As to the sphere of ethnonationalism and politics in Andhra, in the entire scope of research – both Soviet/Russian and international, the following **three groups of works** seem most important.

First, it is the research domain focused on the general topic of nationalism and federalism within the all-Indian context (these works draw upon the data coming from sub-regions, Andhra included). Second, in the list are research works dedicated to the creation of Vishalandhra and building it into India's administrative-territorial setup in the 1950s. Third, there are works dealing with the Telengana movement (which actually means the process of reconstruction of Vishalandhra), and on the traditional factors which contribute to the fragmentation of national self-identity of the Telugu people.

The first group. Since the final decades of the XXth century, against the background of increasing globalization and the related issues of changing or newly emerging ethnic and confessional identities, researchers (P. Brass, Ch. Jaffrelot, S. Corbridge, L. Tillin, Ch. Bhatt and others) have been paying particular attention to the reasons and factors of ethno-political instability in India's various states. In focus have been the processes of formation of collective identity of different ethnic and religious groups in India, including Andhra, as well as attempts of India's governments to manage them. In this line has also been a very profound

and detailed study of a Soviet/Russian author Algis Prazauskas *Ethnos, Politics and State in Contemporary India* (1990). In that book (as well as in his other books and papers) he revealed the interconnections between ethnicity and the political system of India in modern and contemporary history, and discussed the multiple dimensions and contradictions of the process of interethnic integration as well as the specifics of centre – states relations. Within that context he studied ethnic conflicts in India, including the issues of sub-ethnic dissensions and local nationalism in Andhra Pradesh. Methodologically, his top-class research has been up to the highest world standards, and it remains relevant even today, following three decades that have passed since the release of the book.

Among the recent methodologically important research volumes published in Russia of special note is the edited volume *Territory and Belonging: Geopolitical Construction, Human Agency and the Perception of Places* (2016), which focuses on physical and virtual interrelationships of individuals and/or social, ethnic, political, religious and other groups with South Asian territories — either real or fictitious/imagined. The methodological framework of the volume is the spatial/territorial turn in the humanities.

The second group of research works includes those basically dedicated to the formation of Vishalandhra. In our historiography the evolution of Telugu nationalism has been explored within the general context of the ethnolinguistic factor in the political development of the Republic of India. The traditions of studying India's ethnic and national policy were laid down by our esteemed Indologist Alexey Dyakov (1963) followed by a volume by Vladimir Kazakov titled *Struggle for the Setting Up of National States in Independent India* (1967). The latter represented one most comprehensive and in-depth study of the movements aimed at the setting up of national states in the south of India, including the story of Andhra Pradesh and its reconfiguration in 1956 after merging with the Hyderabad state. Kazakov rightly noted that the ethnic issue in India in general and in the South in particular was most difficult because of the Dravidian origin of South Indians. They 'tended to present the disparities in the economic development of the North and the South as national discrimination, as an intention of Gujaratis, Marwaris, Hindustanis to exploit the Dravidian people' (Kazakov 1967: 48). This was why at the initial stage the Telugu nationalism was perceived as a variety of the Dravidian nationalism, but in the 1950s it 'left' Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala and settled down basically in Tamilnadu.

As to the *third group* of works – those dealing with the Telengana movement and its results in the XXIst century – the Russian historiography has had nothing to boast of, and one task of our current project is to start closing the gap.

My conclusion is basically related to the legacy of the South-Asia related research of the Soviet times. In the past two-three decades there's been a common saying that at that time our scholars had just a limited access to visiting India, travelling across South Asia India etc., as they were 'bounded' by all sorts of restrictions and thus were 'non-productive'. I have never agreed with such an assessment. Having revised all our research literature on South India for the purpose of the Andhra part of the current project I must state that that it boasted the highest level of analysis and generalization based on the Indian data. Legacy of the Soviet-times research – or our past – is very rich. It should not be forgotten – and yet another task of our project is to bring it forward, revise it, and make most of it for the current studies of South Asia. No doubt, the future of our past will be appreciated at its true value.

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INDIA-RUSSIA: COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

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Political, economic, cultural developments in India always attracted close public attention in our country. In fact, Indo-Russian relationship proves that the close ties, which existed through years, have preserved themselves facing the calamities of history and have managed not only to survive, but to strengthen, despite initial historical and geographical boundaries, and the impact of changing political situation, including the crucial changes in geopolitical climate. The relations between India and Russia are multilevel and manysided (diplomatic, economic, cultural, military, technical etc.).

Partnership in *academic and educational spheres* plays a visible role in this context.

Indian studies in Russia have a long history, but wide academic studies started in the late XIXth – early XXth century with the emphasis on ancient Indian studies in general and Sanskrit studies in particular. Indian philosophical traditions deeply influenced the philosophers of Russia. India inspired Russia's poets, and we can trace its motives in the poetry of the 'Silver Age'. The interests of the Russian Indological school were wide: publication of the original texts in Sanskrit and Pali went together with the translations of canonical and uncanonical Buddhist works and commentaries to them (Vigasin 2008). The works of Russian scholars were far both from eurocentric writings and from their alternative. They filled the gap between the Western and Eastern studies: Russia occupies a unique position – its territory partly belongs to Europe, partly, to Asia; thus, it combines both Western and Eastern mentality creating a certain Eurasian view on historical and political issues. Gradually academic interests shifted to the studies of modern and contemporary Indian society as well.

A vast *historiography on the comparative studies in history and present situation in both states* already exists in Russian and Indian scholarly traditions. Present-day geopolitical changes open up new prospects of research. The close study and implementation of political experience in practical sphere has been fruitful for both sides (including such domains as federal problems, ethnic and confessional issues along with the question of minorities, development of democracy, coalition politics, problems facing the new political order of today's world). The study of economic reforms in India has proved to be a capable remedy to cure the diseases caused by the current economic crisis. One most important common concern is the threat of terrorism, which represents a great danger to democracy in both India and Russia.

The Indian experience is of great value to our country. India's political initiatives in the international sphere have brought her to the circle of decision-making powers, whose political heritage and modern views are highly estimated and taken into consideration by the politicians and public opinion all over the world. The country boasting the word largest population, great economic potential, and rich cultural and historical roots cannot be neglected in the formation of new attitudes towards the models of political behavior of the XXIst century.

Both countries are members of many international bodies where they jointly collaborate on the matters of common national interest. Russia's preference for multipolarity and encouragement for the promotion of associations like BRICS (Brazil – Russia – India – China – South Africa), as well as SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) aims at setting up a forum outside the Western block where India and Russia along with other countries could discuss issues without the western pressure. Amidst all these positive developments as well as certain concerns, there is a hope that India-Russia friendship and their strategic partnership will scale new heights and will grow in the coming years.

India has managed to pass through an inevitable strife for autonomism and separatism, and has preserved her 'unity in diversity'. India's experience in maintaining the 'center-states' relationship is really valuable for multinational federations like Russia. The experience in creating coalitions both on national and regional levels can definitely become a basis for solving difficult, but not unmanageable questions arising between numerous ethnic and confessional groups.

India's rich experience, both historical and contemporary, has attracted the attention of Russian scholars who accomplished a complex study of

regional factors in the political, ethno-cultural and social development of the largest South Asian country (Kuzyk, Shaumyan 2009). The contributors to the volume discuss various aspects of research in India's society and politics trying to estimate the correlation between all-India studies and regional research programs that are based on depicting certain religious communities, caste, subaltern groups etc. India as a state with well-defined boundaries is discussed as a multitude of regions, from one point of view, and as a civilizational entity, from another.

The interest towards India and its place in the changing world with varying tendencies in political thinking has proved to be constant in our society; being different in comparison with India, it possesses certain similarities in its current development.

Every new generation can reveal some particular features in the historical development and present situation in both countries, and every scholar can estimate the lessons of history according to his own outlook. Actually, Russian scholars usually stress in their works that certain milestones in India's history since independence somehow coincide with the milestones in the history of our country: Nikita Khrushchev – Jawaharlal Nehru (the former was withdrawn from power in 1964, the latter passed away the same year), Leonid Brezhnev – Indira Gandhi (he died in 1982, she was assassinated in 1984), Mikhail Gorbachev – Rajiv Gandhi (Rajiv's tragic death in 1991 coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union). The two countries underwent the so-called 'cool relations period' of the 1990s and then launched a new era of the most privileged strategic partnership at the turn of the XXIst century. Each period boasted distinguishing features not only in high politics, but in the sphere of mass communication as well (Zagorodnikova, Kashin, Shaumyan 2011).

The Indian civilization has given the world brilliant philosophers and political leaders, whose invaluable heritage – being part of the World High Philosophical and Political Tradition – will remain a subject of scholarly studies for ages. Immanent to the Indian mind, their thought is most relevant in the socio-political sphere of contemporary world. Philosophical traditions have had a direct impact on the Indian way of policy-making, a rich experience of which is of great value to present-day politicians. India has given bright examples of political thinking and has created a democratic political system drawing on the principles of common consent, unity and continuity of policy. Such a system has demonstrated the evolutionary type of development based on consensus despite the existing contradictions between political parties, particular

leaders and social tensions, which are immanent to any multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society.

Russian researchers work under a program of academic exchange according to the *Agreement on Mutual Cooperation in Scientific and Educational Fields between India and Russia*. There is a strong need to boost up public interest and mutual understanding for the development of our relationship, particularly among the increasingly influential younger generations. There is a need for a new generation of Indians and Russians to rediscover each other. Without strong public support, it will be difficult to provide a sound foundation and long-term stability to this mutually beneficial strategic partnership. There is no substitute for spontaneous and natural people-to-people exchanges. Today, India-Russia relationship features many positive dimensions and can steadily move on. An enormous amount of work is being done in the field of Indological studies in our country.

We consider it as a duty to contribute to these studies. The Department of South Asian History in the Institute of Asian and African Studies has been functioning since the establishment of the Institute in 1956. The department boasts good relations with the Jawaharlal Nehru University, especially with the School of International Studies, being an active participant in the program of cooperation between Indian and Russian scholars engaged in Indological studies. The main objectives of our academic cooperation are as follows: conducting research in the field of India's historical tradition, as well as in modern and contemporary development of South Asia; incorporating the research results in the educational process; maintaining links with similar educational, research and cultural institutions in Russia and abroad in form of conferences, exchange programs, joint publications, etc.

The new millennium is going to be the era of international interaction and dialogue between the countries of Afro-Asian region and Russia. We view the future of our institution as a steady development in the direction of strengthening contacts with academic and political circles of India. The collaboration in the educational sphere is more than important in maintaining the historical ties between the younger generations in both countries. Though medicine, high-technology and advanced areas of research and application are priority trends in the sphere of education, the historical and political domains are no less essential in creating a good atmosphere of understanding and cultural ties between our two states.

Historical and cultural issues are the heart and soul of any project of cooperation.

Indian and Russian higher educational institutes have signed a Memorandum of Interest for setting up a network of higher education institutions. Once formed and established, the network will contribute to the consolidation of Russian and Indian research and educational efforts in the training of highly skilled personnel as well as in promoting academic exchange programs for teachers and students.

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