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Problems of Democracy in Ethnically Divided South Asian Countries

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Abstract

Ethnic heterogeneity characterizes all South Asian countries. Their populations are divided by language, religion, caste, race, and/or tribe into various groups, which are tended to compete and clash with each other. Consequently, ethnic conflicts in one form or other have been common in all these countries, and it has been difficult to maintain domestic peace. The purpose of this paper is to explore how political and social systems have become adapted to the ethnic heterogeneity of populations and what kinds of institutional strategies have been used in the accommodation of ethnic conflicts. In particular, attention will be paid to the adaptation of democratic institutions to ethnic heterogeneity.

Introduction: Ethnic nepotism

It is characteristics for ethnic groups that they differ genetically from each other to some extent. It is an inevitable consequence of the fact that ethnic groups have usually been more or less strictly endogamous groups over many generations, sometimes hundreds of years. Cross-group marriages have been and are still rare. In many cases, cross-group marriages are strongly discouraged or even forbade. In fact, endogamy is necessary for the survival of an ethnic group. It is easy for geographically separated ethnic groups to remain endogamous, but many geographically overlapping groups have also succeeded to remain endogamous. This concerns equally linguistic,

religious, caste, racial, and tribal groups. Therefore I think that it is justified to regard all of them as ethnic groups to the extent that they differ genetically from each other as a consequence of prolonged endogamous practices.

Genetic differences between groups, even relatively small differences, may affect the social behavior of such groups. According to a sociobiological theory of kin selection, it is genetically rational to behave altruistically toward relatives because one shares more genes with his/her relatives than with outsiders. The idea of kin selection helps to explain the evolution of nepotism among animals and people. The individuals who behaved nepotistically were reproductively more successful than less nepotistically behaved individuals. In this way the disposition to nepotism became engrained into human nature by natural selection. All human populations share this characteristic of human nature (see Vanhanen 1999a:10-11; cf. Wilson 1978: 159; Alexander 1980: 45-54; van den Berghe 1981; Barash 1982: 67-105; Salter 2004).

Our disposition to nepotism is not limited to the level of individuals and families, it seems to extend to the level of large ethnic groups, too. Pierre L. van den Berghe (1981, 2004) applied the sociobiological theory of kin selection to the study of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. He used nepotism to explain ethnicity and constructed the concept of "ethnic nepotism", which refers to nepotism at the level of ethnic groups. I have used human disposition to ethnic nepotism to explain ethnic conflicts in India (Vanhanen 1991) and in all ethnically divided societies (Vanhanen 1999a, 1999b).

Ethnic groups can be perceived as extended kin groups. Their members are tended to support each other in conflict situations. Consequently, many types of interest conflicts tend to become canalized along ethnic cleavages in ethnically heterogeneous countries. From the perspective of ethnic nepotism, it does not matter what kinds of kin groups are in question. The crucial characteristic of an ethnic group is that its members are genetically more closely related to each other than to the members of other groups (Vanhanen 1999a: 11-13).

I have explored the relationship between ethnic nepotism and ethnic conflicts on the basis of two hypothesis: (1) significant ethnic divisions tend to lead to ethnic interest conflicts in all societies, and (2) the more a society is ethnically divided, the more political and other interest conflicts tend to become canalized along ethnic lines. I constructed variables to measure ethnic heterogeneity of populations and variables to measure the extent and intensity of ethnic conflict and then tested the hypothesis by empirical evidence in the groups of 148 and 183 countries. The results show that ethnic conflicts appeared in the 1990s in practically all ethnically heterogeneous countries and that the Index of Ethnic Heterogeneity explains a little more than 50 percent of the variation in the Index of Ethnic Conflicts. So the evidence strongly supports the hypothesis on the emergence of ethnic conflicts in all ethnically divided societies. According to my interpretation,

evolved human disposition to ethnic nepotism provides the best theoretical explanation for this regularity (see Vanhanen 1999a, 1999b)

Ethnic cleavages in South Asian countries

According to my Index of Ethnic Heterogeneity (EH), which takes into account racial, national/linguistic, and old religious divisians, India is ethnically the most heterogeneous South Asian country (EH 128). For Afghanistan and Bhutan, EH is 90, for Nepal 60, Sri Lanka 57, and Pakistan 55. Bangladesh is ethnically the most homogeneous country (EH only 19) (see Vanhanen 1999a: Table 3.4 and Appendix B). The nature of ethnic cleavages varies considerably from country to country. Let us see what kinds of ethnic divisions are important in various South Asian countries.

Afghanistan is racially homogeneous country, but tribe, language, and religious sect divide the population into many territorially separate groups. Pashtus dominate in the south and Tajiks in the northeast and in the west. Other important groups include Hazaras in the central highlands and Uzbeks and Turkmen in the north. Major groups have their own languages, which deepens ethnic divisions. Most people are Sunni Muslims, but Hazaras and a part of Tajiks are Shiite Muslims. It is important to note that each ethnic group has its own core territory in Afghanistan.

Bangladesh is racially and linguistically nearly homogeneous country. Bengali is the dominant language (99%). Muslims constitute a large majority of the population (88%) and Hindus constitute the most significant religious minority. The tribal hill peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tract (1%) are separated from the Bengali Muslims by race, language, and religion.

Bhutan is both racially, linguistically, and religiously divided country. The majority (approximately 70%) of the population are Mongoloids or Indo-Mongoloids. There are two major ethno-linguistic groups of the native Bhutanese (the Drukpas). The Sarchops in eastern Bhutan are the earliest inhabitants. Their origins can be traced to the tribes of north-east India and north Burma. They are Indo-Mongoloids. The Ngalongs are migrants from Tibet, who brought Buddhism with them. They became the rulers subduing the Sarchops and integrating them through concersion to Buddhism and inter-marriages. The Ngalongs speak Dzongkha, a dialect of the Tibetan, and the Sarchops speak several different dialects of non-Tibetan origin. Lamaistic Buddhism is the religion of these groups. The Nepali-speaking minority lives in the six southern districts. They are mixed Caucasoids and by religion Hindus. They started to settle in southern Bhutan in significant numbers after about 1880 (see Das 1986; Labh 1986; Nepal and Bhutan: Country Studies 1993).

India's population is divided by race, language, religion, caste, and tribe into numerous and partly overlapping ethnic groups. Racially the population is relatively homogeneous (Caucasoids),

except for small racially different (Mongoloid) tribal groups. Language divides the Indian population into many large and small territorially concentrated minorities. Hindi (30%) is designed as the official language, but it is the dominant language only in some northern Indian states. The most important religious cleavage is between the Hindu majority (83%) and the Muslim minority (11%). Caste divides the Hindu population into thousands of endogamous caste groups. The members of the Scheduled Castes are separated from the caste Hindus by their "untouchability," and they constitute approximately 16 percent of the population. Besides, there are several tribal groups in different parts of the country. The Scheduled Tribes constitute approximately 8 percent of the population.

Nepal's population is divided by language, religion, and caste into numerous ethnic groups. There may be racial differences between Caucasoid Indo-Nepalese groups and Mongoloid Tibeto-Nepalese groups, but this racial boundary is blurred as a consequence of interbreeding (cf. Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1996: 229-231). Nepali is the official and dominant language (53%). Minority languages include Tibetan, Indian, and Austroasiatic languages. Hinduism is the dominant religion (87%), but there are Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian minorities. Caste divides the Nepalese and Indian ethnic groups.

Pakistan is racially homogeneous (Caucasoids) country and religiously nearly homogeneous country, but language divides the population of Pakistan into five major ethnic groups: Punjabis (48%), Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baluchs, and Mujahirs. Each of them, except Mujahirs (Urdu-speaking refugees from India after the 1947 partition), occupies a separate territory. Islam is the dominant religion (97%), but there are small Hindu and Christian minorities.

Sri Lanka's population is divided by ethnic origin, language, and religion into two major groups: Sinhalese (74%) and Buddhist (69%) majority and the Tamil (19%) and Hindu (16%) minority. Tamils are further divided into two groups: the "old" Tamils (13%), whose forebearers came to the island more than a thousand years ago, and the Indian Tamils (6%), who were brought to Ceylon by British planters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as plantation labor. The old Tamils live in the northern and eastern provinces, whereas most of the Indian Tamils work in the central upland part of the country.

The nature of ethnic cleavages differs from country to country, but they have caused serious problems in all countries, including ethnic discrimination, communal riots, separatist movements, rebellions, terrorism, and civil wars. However, the intensity of ethnic problems and conflicts varies. Some countries have been able to establish more harmonius relations between groups than some other countries. This variation makes it reasonable to investigate the role of institutions in the accommodation of ethnic interest conflicts. It may be that the political systems of some countries have become better adapted to the requirements of ethnic nepotism than political institutions in

some other countries. It is especially interesting to investigate the adaptation of democratic institutions to the ethnic heterogeneity of populations. What kinds of democratic institutions would be best adapted to maintain domestic peace in ethnically divided societies, and what are the problems of democracy in such countries? In the next section, I shall investigate country by country the impact of ethnic cleavages and ethnic nepotism on the political systems of South Asian countries.

The impact of ethnic nepotism

Because of our evolved disposition to ethnic nepotism, it is plausible to expect ethnic interest conflicts in all ethnically divided countries. The question is, to what extent and by what means are political systems adapted to take into account ethnic cleavages and to satisfy the requirements of ethnic nepotism, especially the strivings of ethnic groups to further their own interests? Preliminary one could assume that democratic institutions providing representation to all important groups are better adapted to satisfy the requirements of ethnic nepotism than autocratic institutions based on the dominance of one particular group. However, there are many types of democratic institutions, and all of them are not necessarily equally well adapted to ethnic cleavages.

Afghanistan

The drifting of Afghanistan into rebellions and civil wars since the 1978 left-wing coup can be interpreted as a consequence of the failure to establish democratic institutions which could provide satisfactory representation to various ethnic groups. The autocratic left-wing governments in 1978-79 were not willing to share power with traditional tribal chiefs, which caused tribal rebellions. After the Soviet intervention in December 1979, power became even more concentrated in the hands of the government, and rebellions escalated into a civil war and resistance against the Soviet occupation. In the latter half of the 1980s, the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) government attempted to introduce democratic reforms, but they did not satisfy the rebelling Mujaheddin alliance. The Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989 did not stop the civil war. In April 1992 the government of president Najibullah lost power, but already before that the Islamic guerrilla troops had become divided along ethnic lines and had started to fight among themselves. They were unable to compromise and to share power peacefully. The fundamentalist Taliban troops took Kabul and most parts of the country in 1996.

The U.S. military intervention led to the military defeat of the Taliban regime in December 2001, which made it possible to establish an interim government supported by the International Security Assistance Forces. The new interim government started the transition to civilian rule.

Tribal representatives elected an Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002. It elected Hamid Karzai as a Head of State and appointed a Transitional Authority (government). Competing regional ethnic groups are represented in the Loya Jirga and in the government. It is a good start for the process of democratization (see Europa 2003: 406-419; Freedom House 2003: 40-44).

Afghanistan's political system has become adapted to ethnic cleavages and to the requirements of ethnic nepotism, but, in the lack of suitable democratic institutions, power and territorial control of the country became divided by military means. It does not need to be so. It would be possible to establish political institutions through which different ethnic groups could share power. The establishment of such institutions depends on political will and on the wisdom of political leaders. Because Afghanistan's major ethnic groups are principally territorial groups, it is evident that a political system adapted to the requirements of ethnic nepotism should be a federal system. Federalism would transfer a significant part of political action to ethnically relatively homogeneous federal units. Elections should be based on a proportional electoral system, and different ethnic groups should be represented in the central government. A parliamentary system might be more suited to Afghanistan than a presidential system, which concentrates too much power for one person, who is inevitably from one particular ethnic group.

Afghanistan's traditional *Loya Jirga* (council of tribal elders) institution provides probably the best starting point for the transition process. The new draft constitution introduced in November 2003 is not a federal one. It attempts to establish a centralized state (see The Economist, November 8th 2003, pp. 55-56). The future will show whether a unitary state system is better adapted to Afghanistan's circumstances than a federal one. In fact, at local level power is still in the hands of regional tribal military groups.

Bangladesh

Ethnic nepotism has impacted on the political system of Bangladesh, although it is ethnically the most homogeneous country in South Asia. The partition of Pakistan in 1971 was caused not only by the geographical distance between West Pakistan and East Pakistan but also by the deep ethnic cleavage between the two parts of the country and the dissatisfaction of the East Pakistan's Bengalis to the dominance of West Pakistan's Punjabis. They revolted against the West Pakistan's military forces in East Pakistan and transformed East Pakistan, with the support of India, an independent state of Bangladesh.

The ethnic nepotism of the Muslim majority is reflected in some characteristics of the political system of Bangladesh. Political power is completely concentrated in the hands of the Muslim majority, although Bangladesh is not an Islamic state, and the position of the Hindu minority is precarious. The first-past-the post electoral system favors the dominance of the Muslim majority

and effectively prevents Hindus from getting any representation to the parliament through their own parties. A proportional electoral system would help the Hindus to get a fair representation to the parliament. The democratic institutions of Bangladesh seem to be designed to minimize the participation and influence of ethnic minorities. A problem of democracy in Bangladesh is, as Howard B. Schaffer (2002: 79) remarks that the "concept of loyal opposition that accepts constitutional processes and is prepared to wait its turn to form a government is virtually unknown in Bangladesh."

Ethnic nepotism has played the most significant role in the relations between the Bengali majority and the tribal Hill peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tract. The tribals are separated from the Bengali Muslims by race, language, and religion. Bengali Muslims have furthered their group interests by colonizing the traditional territories of the tribals, by dislodging and decimating them, and by occupying their lands. The tribal organizations demanded autonomy for the tribal area. The tribals try to defend their lands and culture. It has been a cruel struggle for existence, powered by ethnic nepotism. As a consequence of insurgency, tens of thousands of tribals fled to India (Tripura). The peace agreement made between the government and the political wing of the Shanti Bahini in December 1997, satisfied some demands of the tribals, and most refugees were repatriated. However, the conflict continues, and thousands of members of Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu minorities have fled to Tripura (see Europa 2003: 660-662; Freedom House 2003: 78-82).

Bhutan

Bhutan's political system has become adapted to the ethnic heterogeneity of its population in such a way that political power is concentrated in the hands of the traditional ruling monarchy and Buddhist lamas. The Ngalongs constitute the dominant ethnic group. Their Tibetan-derived language Dzongkha was made the national language. The rights of the Nepalese in the southern districts are limited. They are not permitted to migrate or own property in the upper regions, and they are not properly represented in the political and economic institutions. They were treated as aliens and the Bhutanese policy was to isolate them by confining them to southern Bhutan. Bhutan's political system is not democratic and it does not provide equal rights to all ethnic groups, although there are some democratic institutions, especially the National Assembly. Bhutan's political system is based on the hegemony of the ruling elite and their ethnic group. As such the system is vulnerable (cf. Das 1986; Labh 1986; Europa 2003: 771, 777-778).

Kapileshwar Labh notes that "modernization process in Bhutan threw up ethnic challenges for the monarchy. The ethnic groups which had been dormant until the mid-1950's are getting politicized with the spread of modern education and are growing assertive as distinct linguistic and cultural groups" (Labh 1986: 190). The Nepali Bhutanese constitute a serious challenge to the

ruling elite of Bhutan. Since the 1950s they started to demand equal rights. The government changed its policy toward them and has been making efforts to integrate them into the political system of the country. They were given some representation in the National Assembly when it was established in 1953, and the government has encouraged intermarriages between the Nepali Bhutanese and other ethnic groups.

The situation has worsened since the 1980s. The indigenous people fear that they might lose the control of their country to Nepali-speaking Hindus. The king initiated a campaign for the revival of the Bhutanese identity and culture, and the teaching of Nepali in schools was forbidden. Many Nepali-speakers in the south were declared as illegal immigrants. As a consequence of violent conflicts and pressure, nearly 100,000 Nepali Bhutanese had to leave the contry since 1990. They live as refugees in Nepal and India (cf. Das 1986; Thinley 1994; Hutt 1994). The governments of Nepal and Bhutan have not yet been able to agree on their repatriation to Bhutan (see Europa 2003: 768-771: Freedom House 2003: 95-98).

Ethnic nepotism has powered ethnic conflicts in Bhutan. The question is on the struggle for national existence in a limited space. The autocratic political system is not adapted to accommodate ethnic interest conflicts. It might be possible to mitigate ethnic conflict by making southern Bhutan an autonomous region and by granting an equal status to Nepali-speaking Hindus. However, such reforms based on the principles of equality may not be acceptable to indigenous Bhutanese. They would like to expel Nepalese immigrants in order to retain control of their country.

India

The impact of ethnic nepotism on India's political system has been significant. Several characteristics of the country's political system reflect ethnic cleavages. Because of the linguistic and regional heterogeneity of the population, the constitutional system of the Indian Union was made partly federal. At first the state system of the Indian Union was established nearly independently from language groups, but quite soon it was foud necessary to reorganize states along major linguistic boundaries. The political system bacame adapted to the very strong pressure of the large language groups. The partition of India in 1947 settled the major conflict between Hindus and Muslims, but there is still a large Muslim minority in India. It is dispersed around India without their own majority territories, except in Kashmir.

The first-past-the-post electoral system is adapted to serve the interests of the dominant Hindu population. Such an electoral system makes it practically impossible for Muslims to organize their own political parties and to get representation in legislatures. They can get representation only through some major parties. The same concerns other religious minorities to the extent that they are dispersed around the country. Tribal groups and the lowest castes (the

scheduled castes or Dalits) have constitutional safeguards, but, because of the British first-past-the-post electoral system, it has been very difficult, although not completely impossible, for them to get a representation in legislatures through their own parties.

The Indian party system reflects the impact of caste and other ethnic cleavages. All parties take caste divisions into account when they select candidates for elections, and some parties represent particular caste groups. Many territorially concentrated ethnic groups have established their own political parties. As a consequence, the significance of regional parties has increased. The adaptation of the party system to the requirements of ethnic nepotism takes place through elections. Caste and other ethnic interests seem to be the principal factors that determine the support of political parties. From this perspective, the ethnic heterogeneity of the Indian population seem to have supported the democratic competition for power and democracy. Thus democratic institutions have helped to accommodate various ethnic strivings. India's governmental system has also become adapted to ethnic heterogeneity in the sense that since the 1990's Indian governments have been coalition governments in which, in addition to a major national party, many regional and ethnic parties are represented. The same concerns also several state governments (see Europa 2003: 2016-2024, 2034-2038). Sumit Ganguly (2002: 50) says that in the face of myriad challenges, "democracy in India has endured and has grown deep roots in Indian soil."

Many aspects of the Indian political system have become adapted to the requirements of ethnic nepotism, but not sufficiently in all matters and in all parts of the country, which indicates that it has not been possible to solve all ethnic interest conflicts through democratic institutions, or that democratic institutions are not sufficiently adapted to the requirements of ethnic cleavages. There are still many types of ethnic conflicts in India; violent separatist movements of Muslims in Kashmir and of several tribal groups in different parts of the country; occasional communal violences between Hindus and Muslims and to a lesser degree with other religious minorities (Sikhs and Christians), too; territorial conflicts between language groups; and continual conflicts between caste groups, particularly between caste Hindus and untouchable castes (Dalits) but also between the upper castes and the other backward castes. India's federal system and other institutional arrangements have mitigated ethnic conflicts, especially linguistic conflicts, and facilitated the coexistence of numerous ethnic groups. The establishment of new states (Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttaranchal) in 2000 indicates the ability of the political system to accommodate ethnic and regional strivings, but Kashmir has remained as an unsolved problem (cf. Bachal 1997; Europa 2003: 2016-2024; The Economist, "India's shining hopes: A survey of India, February 21st 2004; Freedom House 2003: 254-259). Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph (2002: 52) note about India's achievements that the "Indian experiment runs against the widely held view that rich societies are much more likely to be democratic than poor ones, and that societies with large

minority populations are prone to ethnic cleansing and civil war."

My argument is that it might be possible to improve institutional arrangements from the perspective of ethnic accommodation and that all India's political istitutions are not well suited to the requirements of ethnic nepotism. The federal system should be strengthened and it should be made more flexible. The autonomous status of all states does not need to be the same. Kashmir would need an especially strong autonomy. However, even an extensive autonomy might not be enough to solve the problem of Kashmir because Pakistan has not accepted the accession of Kashmir to India. The tribal states of Assam would also need extensive forms of autonomy. Besides, it might be advisable to establish autonomous territorial units within states for tribal, linguistic, and religious minorities. It might be useful to change India's electoral system proportional, because it could serve the needs of an ethnically heterogeneous society better than the present first-past-the-post system. It is not possible to eliminate ethnic conflicts from politics, but conflicts can be mitigated by providing effective institutional canals for the expression of ethnic demands and competition (cf. Lijphart 1996; Puri 1997; Bachal 1997)

Nepal

Nepal's traditional political system was monarchical autocracy just like in Bhutan. It was based on the support of the dominant ethnic groups. In Nepal, Chetris (Ksastriya) and Hill Bahuns (Brahmin) have traditionally constituted the dominant caste groups. Other sections of the population were excluded from national politics, but, as a consequence of modernization, the process of political mobilization of other ethnic groups started in the 1950s. The pressure for democratization increased. The king and dominant castes made some concessions, but they were able to maintain the traditional monarchical autocracy until the democratic breakthrough in 1990. The country's governmental system has been parliamentary since the introduction of the 1990 constitution (see Europa 2003: 2990-91, 2997).

Nepal's ethnic interest groups are partly unorganized, which explains the fact that political power is still concentrated in the hands of the traditional dominant castes. The most conspicuous ethnic cleavage is between the Indians of the Terai region in the south and the Nepalese-speaking majority. This ethnic cleavage is already reflected in party alignments. The Indians of the Terai region have their own parties, although they have not been particularly successful in elections. Several other ethnic divisions have not yet beecome politically important. The major parties are multiethnic parties dominated by Brahmins and other elite groups. According to the constitution, Nepal is a Hindu state, which supports the dominance of high caste Hindus. The election commission has the right to bar from elections parties which are formed on the basis of religion, caste, tribe, or religion. This right has been used to control non-Hindu parties and organizations.

The impact of ethnic nepotism is reflected in Nepal's political institutions, which are designed to support the dominance of the country's Hindu majority. Nepal is a unitary state without any federal structures. The lack of federal structures stifles political aspirations of regional ethnic minorities. Political institutions are biased to discriminate against minority groups. The Indians of the Terai region, for example, have continually been underrepresented in the administrative services, in the government, and in the parliament, but other ethnic minorities and low Hindu castes are even more underrepresented and discriminated against (see Ramakant and B.C. Upreti 1986; Kaushik 1996; Mishra 1996).

The Maoist insurgence in Nepal since 1999 may reflect the fact that the political system is not sufficiently adapted to serve the interests of lower caste groups. At least partly, this insurgency can be interpreted as a protest against the traditional privileges and dominance of the upper castes. The Maoist insurgency paralysed the country's democratic institutions; the king assumed executive power and postponed indefinitely parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2002 (see Europa 2003: 2986-2991; Freedom House 2003: 399-403).

Pakistan

It has been very difficult for Pakistan's political system to become adapted to the requirements of ethnic nepotism. Since the beginning, Pakistan has been an Islamic state, and discrimination against non-Muslims is built into the system (Ahmed 1993), but its political system is not sufficiently well adapted to linguistic, regional, and other cleavages within the Muslim majority. Unlike Nepal, all major ethnic groups are politically mobilized in Pakistan, which has increased the frequency of conflicts. Many ethnic conflicts since independence reflect the failure of the country's political system to satisfy the aspirations of ethnic groups.

The Pashtuns have occasionally rebelled and demanded Pashtunistan, which would include Pashtun areas of Afghanistan, too. Ethnic conflicts in Baluchistan have been more violent than in the NWFP. The Baluch tribes have rebelled against the Pakistani government since 1947. They have demanded greater regional autonomy, or independence. The most serious ethnic conflict has occured in Sind, where the two major ethnic groups (Sindhis and Mujahirs) struggle for hegemony and territories. After the 1947 partition, the Mujahirs dominated political institutions, and Urdu was used as the official language, but the Punjabis achieved dominance since the 1960s and moved the capital from Karachi to Islamabad in Punjab. As a consequence, Urdu-speaking Mujahirs slipped from dominance to subordination without even a province of their own. This decline produced the militant Mujahir Quami Movement (MQM), or Refugees' Nationalist Front, which has struggled against the Sindhis and the Punjabis since the 1970s. They demand a separate state of Karachi. The Sindhis does not want to lose the control of their own region to Mujahirs and oppose

them. Some rebellious Sindhi groups have demanded independence (see Singh 1986; Ahmed 1993; Europa 2003: 3194-3206; Freedom House 2003: 423-428).

Aqil Shah (2002) emphasizes the crucial significance of the military in Pakistan. It is an interventionist military. He says that the "Pakistani military is acutely wary of the emergence of any independent power center that could pose a threat to its internal autonomy and its dominance of both state and society" (p. 72). Unlike in India, the military is not under civilian control in Pakistan.

The Punjabis constitute the dominant ethnic group in Pakistan. They dominate in the military, too. The problem is how to share power with other regional ethnic groups. The semi-federal system with provincial legislatures and governments is adapted to major ethnic divisions, but it does not seem to be enough for Baluchistan and Sind. The government has used the strategies of hegemonic control and suppression to manage ethnic relations. Institutional adaptations might help to mitigate ethnic tension. A proportional electoral system would give a better representation for ethnic minorities than the first-past-the-post system and also facilitate the competition of secular parties throughout the country. It might be advisable to expand the regional autonomy of Baluchistan, Sind, and North-West Frontier Province because the peoples of these regions differ clearly from the dominating Punjabis.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an example of a country in which a political failure to adapt the country's political institutions to the requirements of ethnic nepotism caused the degeneration of ethnic relations into a bitter civil war. The constitutional institutions inherited from the British colonial period did not provide any special status to the Tamil and Muslim minorities, and the British first-past-the-post electoral system was not suitable to safeguard a fair minority representation. However, because Tamil population is concentrated in the northern and eastern provinces, Tamil parties were well represented in the parliament, but there were no other power-sharing institutions. Tamil parties demanded autonomy for Tamil regions, but the Sinhalese majority was not willing to grant autonomy to the Tamil regions. The failure to agree on the extent and forms of Tamil autonomy strengthened the position of Tamil separatists, who started to demand partition of Sri Lanka and the establishment of an independent Tamil state. The civil war between the Sinhalese government forces and the Tamil separatists has continued since 1983. The secessionist Tamil Tigers (LTTE) demanded independence for the Tamil regions of the country until the cease-fire agreement in 2002 (see Suryanarayan 1986; Europa 2003: 3858-3861; Freedom House 2003: 517-520).

Neil DeVotta (2002: 84) points out that the "cancer that eats at Sri Lanka's political life is ´ethnic outbidding´: the auction-like process whereby Sinhalese politicians try to outdo one another

by playing on their majority community's fears and ambitions." He argues that this "outbidding" plunged the country into a protracted conflict and reduced democracy to a hallow shell. Sri Lankans "of all backgrounds have paid a heavy price for their country's misguided ethnic policies" (p. 96).

Institutional failures contributed to the deterioration of ethnic relations. It was an unfortunate decision to attempt to rule the country as a unitary state. If the Sinhalese majority had agreed to grant an extensive autonomy to the Tamil and other minority regions of the country, it is quite possible that the bloody civil war would have never started. It is still possible to end the civil war and to retain the territorial integrity of the country by granting autonomy to Tamil provinces. However, it is difficult to agree on the extent and forms of autonomy (see Bostock 1997: Europa 2003: 3860-3861).

Discussion

According to my theory of ethnic nepotism, ethnic conflicts are inevitable in all ethnically divided countries because of our evolved disposition to support relatives in interest conflicts. From this perspective, ethnic conflicts in all South Asian countries are not exceptional. However, interest conflicts do not need to become violent. Political institutions that are sufficiently well adapted to the country's ethnic cleavages may accommodate and mitigate ethnic interest conflicts. The purpose of this paper has been to investigate how well the political systems and especially democratic institutions of South Asian countries are adapted to manage ethnic relations. The review shows that the success in the regulation of ethnic interest conflicts varies from country to country. The fact that violent ethnic conflicts have occured in all South Asian countries implies that the adaptation of political institutions to the ethnic heterogeneity of the population is not perfect in any country.

In principle, the institutional regulation of ethnic relations can extend from the lack of any institutional regulation of ethnic relations to the level of complete institutional regulation. In the lack of any institutional regulation, each ethnic group is free to take care of its interests by any means, including the use of open violence (as in Afghanistan). The complete institutional regulation prevents violent conflicts and maintains domestic peace. This can be achieved by two quite different ways: through hegemonic control or through democratic institutions. In hegemonically controlled systems, political power is concentrated in the hands of one particular ethnic group, which is sufficiently strong to maintain hierarcical relations between ethnic groups and to prevent violent conflicts. On the other hand, democratic institutions may be so well adapted to the ethnic structure of the society that all ethnic groups can further and defend their interests through democratic politics. So there is no need for violent struggles.

In the real world, political systems are somewhere between these ideal types. It would be

difficult to find a country without any institutional attempt to regulate ethnic relations; there are often defects in the hegemonic control of ethnic relations; and democratic institutions are rarely adapted to satisfy equally the strivings of all ethnic groups. However, the three ideal types may help us to see differences between the seven South Asian countries.

During the long civil war, Afghanistan was a country without effective political institutions to regulate ethnic relations. As a consequence, there was a situation of the Hobbesian war of every man, against every man (see Hobbes 1962: 100). In Afghanistan, because of ethnic nepotism, "every man" was replaced by "every ethnic group". The election of Loya Jirga in 2002 started an attempt to establish democratic institutions and to adapt them to the requirements of ethnic cleavages. It is a transfer toward the model of democratic accommodation.

The traditional political systems of Nepal and Bhutan were close to the model of hegemonic control. In Nepal, upper castes dominated politics through traditional monarchy. Domestic peace was maintained by dominance and suppression. The democratization of the system in the 1990s weakened the dominance of the upper castes and escalated the political mobilization of lower castes and ethnic minorities. The Maoist insurgency since 1999 can be interpreted as an expression of the political mobilization of lower caste groups. Democratic institutions were evidently not sufficiently adapted to serve the interests of lower castes. In Bhutan, domestic peace was maintained until the 1990s through the hegemony of one particular ethnic group (Ngalongs) and monarchy. The system seems to have failed in its attempt to integrate and to subjugate the Nepalese minority. Bangladesh is also near the model of hegemonic control, but democratic institutions provide a legal framework for the struggle for power within the the dominant Muslim and Bengali majority.

In Pakistan, attempts were made to regulate ethnic relations through democratic institutions (ethnic provinces and political parties), but democratic institutions failed several times, and ethnic relations have degenerated into violent clashes and separatist movements. The rise of Punjabis to the status of dominant ethnic group has moved Pakistan toward the model of hegemonic control. The Muslim hegemony is complete in Pakistan, but the dominance of Punjabis is continually challenged. Democratic institutions are mixed with hegemonic strivings in Pakistan.

In the first decades of independence, Sri Lanka was close the model of democratic accommodation. There was a balance between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority, and democratic institutions provided representation to both major groups. The situation changed when the Sinhalese majority started to strive for hegemonic dominance. Since the Tamil insurgency began in the 1980s, the ethnic relations in Sri Lanka have approached the Hobbesian anarchy. A new democratic compromise has been sought in peace negotiations, but it is extremely difficult to agree an the adaptation of democratic institutions to the requirements of ethnic nepotism.

India is near the ideal type of democratic accommodation. Its federal system satisfies the

demands of major language groups and also the autonomy strivings of some tribal groups. The fragmented party system accommodates the strivings of caste interests and reflects many regional and ethnic cleavages. The coalition governments since the 1990s provide representation for various regional and ethnic groups through their own parties. A major defect of India's democratic institutions is that its first-past-the-post electoral system discriminates against the large geographically dispersed Muslim minority as well other geographically dispersed ethnic minority groups. The electoral system makes it nearly impossible for Muslims and other geographically dispersed ethnic groups to get a fair representation to legislatures through their own parties. The continuation of many kinds of ethnic violences in India implies that democratic institutions are not fully adapted to accommodate the strivings of ethnic nepotism.

It is evident that the political systems of South Asian countries are imperfectly adapted to accommodate ethnic interest conflicts, but it is difficult for an outsider to say how they could be improved. Besides, it should be noted that the present political institutions have become modified in the continual competition and struggle for power. The purpose in this competion has not been to seek an ideal model to accommodate ethnic interest conflicts but to further each groups's own interests. In some cases, depending on the relative strength of competing groups, this struggle has led to the hegemonic control of one group and to the subjugation of other groups; in some other cases, it has led to democratic compromises and to the accommodation of ethnic interest conflicts through democratic institutions. However, it seems to me that democratic institutions in South Asia are better adapted to accommodate ethnic interest conflicts than autocratic and hegemonic systems. Therefore, if the purpose is to avoid violent conflicts and to establish harmonious societies in which different ethnic groups can coexist and share power, it would be reasonable to introduce democratic institutions that are adapted to provide fair representation and necessary autonomy for all significant groups. Of course, democratic institutions should be adapted to the particular circumstances and needs of each country.

Afghanistan would need institutions that make it possible for regional ethnic groups to share power on equal terms; the long civil war shows that any ethnic group is not strong enough to stabilize its hegemony and to subjugate other groups. In Bangladesh, the tribal groups of the Chittagong Hill Tract would need sufficient autonomy, and the adoption of a proportional electoral system would help the Hindu minority to get a fair representation through its own parties. In Bhutan, the transition to democracy would equalize power relations between ethnic groups, but it might not be enough to solve the conflict between the native Bhutanese and the Nepalese minority if the native Bhutanese want to expel Nepalese migrants from Bhutan and to occupy their territories. In India, it might be possible to satisfy the demands of several regional and ethnic minorities by establishing new states and autonomous areas, but it is more difficult to accommodate

the protracted conflict between the HIndus and the Muslims. The transition to a proportional electoral system would make it possible for Muslims to get a fair representation through their own parties, but it may be impossible for the Hindu majority to accept such a democratic reform. Many other minorities and lower castes would also benefit from a proportional electoral system. In Nepal, ethnic interest conflicts are still dormant because many subjugated ethnic groups have not yet become politically mobilized. A proportional electoral system might provide an institutional framework to accommodate emerging ethnic interest conflicts. Pakistan would need a stronger federal framework to countervail the strive of Punjabis to achieve a hegemonic position. In Sri Lanka, a strong federal framework is needed to accommodate the conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority, but it is difficult to agree on the territorial boundaries and on the extent of Tamil autonomy.

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