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Review

Oil activities, unsustainable environment and the combative reactionism of women in the Niger Delta

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The Niger Delta is made up mainly of rural communities with the majority of the people depending mostly on fishing and farming for their livelihoods. The traditional division of labour gives the Niger Delta woman primary responsibility for providing for and managing the sustenance of the family household. Women depend mainly on the environment to eke out a living as they have little access to and control over land, education and skilled work. Years of oil exploration activities with frequent oil spillages have led to severe environmental degradation with resultant destruction of farmlands and aquatic flora and fauna. This has placed extra burden on women in the Niger Delta, as they have to strive even harder to meet their daily needs. In addition, women are also the least to be hired by the oil companies in the Niger Delta. Women thus, suffer a discrepant impoverishment that deflates their status vis-à-vis men. The effect of the environment on the women of the degraded Niger Delta communities includes a high level of poverty and reduction in economic activities.

Key words: Oil activities, women's reaction, Niger Delta.

INTRODUCTION

The environment is the cornerstone of human security, especially for people living in poverty. It is not only because their existence largely relies on subsistence activities, which depend on natural resources, but because they also perceive their well-being as tied to the environment in terms of livelihoods, health, vulnerability and the ability to control their lives. Poorer people are easily susceptible to changes in the environment, mostly because social, political and economic exclusion means they almost always have fewer choices about where they live. They bear the brunt of natural hazards, biodiversity loss and the depletion of forests, pollution (air, water and soil), and the negative impacts of industrial activities, as they impact on their potential for food security. The linkage between agriculture and rural economy is that livelihood security must be secured. This can only be

done through agriculture because livelihood is secured when it can cope or recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities, while not undermining the natural resource base. Indeed, development literature clearly shows that the environment is the basis for the sustenance and survival of man (Olagbaiye, 1990:1; Emeribe, 2000:209). Environmental resources give meaning to man's productive activities. For this reason, man's productivity depends on the quality of the environment. Thus, development cannot subsist upon a deteriorating environmental resource base. In support of this assertion, Brundtland (1984) deduced that people's livelihood security is based more or less exclusively on the use of natural resources. Therefore, management of natural resources for the present use, while not undermining the future use of such resources is very

important and critical. Several authors have documented the existence of substantial multiplier effects from agriculture to non-agriculture, especially in Asia, but also in sub-Saharan Africa (Hagblade et al., 2007).

The pervasive livelihood insecurity precipitated by the oil and gas extraction on the entire Niger Delta environment remains a major challenge to initiating and attaining a livelihood system across the region. Therefore, it is not possible to discuss sustainable livelihoods in the Niger-Delta without referring to oil extraction and its impacts on the environment. Studies have shown that non-timber forest products, such as firewood, snails, medicinal plants and spices, have significantly declined in recent years due to pollution and deforestation (CASS, 2003; NDHDR, 2006).

Until the advent of oil, a delicate balance existed between the people of the Niger Delta and its fragile ecosystem. Exploitation of natural resources was in the main, rudimentary and did not go beyond the search for medicinal herbs, fuel-wood, game, fish and construction materials. Environmental sustainability was maintained as available resources outmatched the needs of the people. Today, the Niger Delta environment has changed and continues to change rapidly. Oil and gas activities have infringed on the people and their environment, leading to the opening up of previously pristine ecosystems. This has resulted in alteration of habitats, biodiversity loss, deforestation and pollution (Amakiri, 2005). While natural hazards are responsible for some impacts on the environment, oil activities have no doubt aggravated the situation. A World Bank report (1990) observed that the oil industry, in the Niger Delta has both an urban and a rural presence, as oil wells are located throughout the rural areas. Chronic leaks have resulted in widespread destruction of fishing and agricultural resources and contributed significantly to the deforestation that have completely destroyed marine life in affected areas. The observation by the World Bank was also corroborated by Akobo (1998:10), when he stated that: "Most of the Niger Delta remains a shell even though Shell and the other multinational oil companies are still operating in the area". Pollution of farmlands, fishing streams, deforestation, corrosive erosion and other woes have all been traced to the oil exploration and production activities of the oil companies. This is because the oil companies do not observe best practices in their operations in the Niger Delta.

The oil companies operating in the Niger Delta have the worst records of environmental abuses in the world¹. This is reinforced by the fact that Shell's operations in the Niger Delta that constitute only 14% of its oil production worldwide, account for over 40% of its oil spills worldwide (Gilbert, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that the Niger Delta is where by far, the majority of the people live in neglect and poverty and where women are the poorest of the poor (HRW, 2002, 2004, 2007). All these have given

rise to cyclic conflicts in the Niger Delta. Women suffer severe hardships during conflict as reports show that 90% of war casualties are mostly women (Women Watch, Fact Sheet 5, 2005) and the Niger Delta is no exception. Decades of militarisation have subjected women in oil host-communities to all kinds of violence. Women have been raped, maimed and murdered even in front of family members (Robinson, 1996). Husbands have also, been killed or maimed, creating greater burdens for most women as head of households. The Federal Office of Statistics (2006) welfare survey reported the Niger Delta as area having most households headed by women.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Gender, as an analytical category, captures the complex matrix of social relationships within society (Rosaldo, 1980; UNPFA, 2003). Gender is the basis of structural inequality in all societies (Caprioli, 2005); it determines roles power relationships, responsibilities, expectations, and access to resources (UNPFA, 2003). Thus, gender is used as a benchmark to determine access and power, and is the rubric under which inequality is justified and maintained (Caprioli, 2005). Gender hierarchy "reinforces itself through system of rules and penalties; enforced in all aspects of life" (Grant, 1993:161). There are gender socially assigned tasks and obligations in all societies. It is the women's task to provide for the upkeep of the family in the Niger Delta (Onoge, 2002:6). Women in upland areas engage in farming of food crops such as; cassava, yam, maize, sweet potato, and in the past, cocoyam, while women in the riverine areas engage fish and gather sea foods; periwinkles, oysters, snails, shrimps, and crayfish. Women are thus, "food producers, procurers and preparers" (Okon, 2002:67). However, servile poverty, coupled with huge rise in women-headed households (Uchendu, 1995), women are forced increasingly to play active financial role in their families and are becoming wage earners (Sudarkasa, 2005:27). As such, beyond the food needs of the family, women produce or gather more for sale to augment family income. As Meagher (1999) opines, the tendency of men under economic pressures have been to transfer greater burden of household needs to women. Being mostly uneducated and poor, women rely on diverse forms of survival strategies with agriculture accounting for their main source of income and about 90% of family food needs (Weidemann, 1987; Picard, 1995; Moser 1996; Davies 1996a,b; UN-ECA, 2001). Indeed, in both rural and urban areas, the vast majority of the poor have individual household and community survival strategies that include myriad activities and a number of other mechanisms for coping in times of crisis (Chambers and

Conway, 1992; SIDA, 1995; Grown and Sebstad, 1989).

Since people usually find ways to meet their needs for survival, livelihood appears to better capture how people live, their actual priorities and main activities. The vital issues of concern are the extent that these activities meet immediate needs and their sustainability to also meet future needs (Carney, 1998). Sustainability has two main aspects; environmental and social sustainability. Environmental sustainability refers to fears over degradation, pollution and over-exploitation of non-renewable resources, while social sustainability involves the maintenance of livelihoods while protecting and boosting local capacities on which livelihoods depend (Chambers, 1995). Livelihood as a concept focuses on how individual household or groups make their living and their resources (Olujide, 2000). It reveals the activities that people perform to meet basic needs to generate income. The concept embraces not only the present availability of the means to make a living but also the security against unexpected shocks and crises that threaten livelihoods. Thus, livelihood is different from "work", which is a specific activity performed in exchange for payment. Though money is obtained for work, livelihood is engaged in the support of life; hence, livelihood may or may not involve money exchange. In the Niger Delta, women combine a variety of activities that yield both monetary and material returns to support livelihoods and their wellbeing. These activities are highly dependent on the environment (Omorodon, 2004); as a result, women mostly bear the brunt of environmental degradation (UNDP, 2002). This is why women are always ready to confront any situation considered inimical to the realisation of their livelihood, which explains their intense protest against oil activities. In the Niger Delta, protection of the environment is not a key factor for the oil companies, thus, they carry out their operations with impunity. Consequently, this has led to severe pollution of the environment with concomitant effects on livelihoods and well-being. Ramifications of oil activities in the Niger Delta environment form the next focus of the discussion.

Oil activities and ramifications on the Niger Delta environment

The Niger Delta that Saro-Wiwa (1999:13-14) described as the heart and lungs of Nigeria produces about 85% of Nigeria's oil and has one of the most fragile ecosystems in the world. The effects of oil activities have been the focus of several studies given their consequence on the environment (Awobanjo, 1981; Onosode, 2003; Achudume, 2009). Most of the harmful effects are from two main sources; gas flaring and oil spillage. According to Gerth and Labaton (2004), about 56.6 million cubic metres of gas is flared in the Niger Delta daily. This is about 16% of the world's total gas (GGFR, 2002), which

can serve the cooking need of 320 million people (Goldenberg, 2000). The flares emit over 34 million tons of carbon dioxide and 12 million tons of methane annually (Shelby, 1996:28; World Bank, 1995, 2000/2001) and the largest contributor to global warming (Hunt, 2000). Annually, volume of gas estimated at US\$2.5 billion is flared daily in the Niger Delta (Osuoka and Roderick, 2005).

Furthermore, incessant oil spillages have accompanied oil activities in the region. The Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) put the volume of crude oil spilled in the region between 1976 and 2005 at about 3, 121, 909.8 barrels in about 9.107 incidents (Egberongbe et al., 2006). Independent researchers have dismissed the figures averring that they are three times higher (Grevy, 1995; Owolabi and Okwechime, 2007). Most of the spills are from pipeline and flow lines, which have the most damaging effects as, they are not immediately addressed due to delays in closing valves or back pressure flows (Orubima, 1983; Onosode, 2003; Osuoka and Roderick, 2005). In addition, clean ups are usually tardy and limited. As such, little oil is recovered, making pollution impacts more acute on the ecosystem (Kemedi, 2003). The effects are significant and include destroying mangrove forests, habitat and nursery of aquatic species (Duke and Burns, 1999; Egborge, 2000; Emuedo and Anoliefo, 2008), mangrove death through stunted roots growth (Emuedo and Anoliefo, 2008). This has severely impacted the region's biodiversity, fish stocks and marine life; denying women one of their major means of their livelihood, fishing. Also, total hydrocarbons in streams in most parts of the Niger Delta are 360 and 680 times the European Union's permissible levels (HRW, 1999). On land, impacted areas due to oil spills are unsuitable for farming over two decades later (Frynas, 2000:169). All these as have alienated women from their means of livelihoods stultifying their economic potentials.

Impacts of oil activities on women in the Niger Delta

Agricultural practices constitute the main source of livelihood and income in rural Niger Delta. However, agricultural practices have been stultified by the negative impacts of oil activities (Emoyan et al., 2008). In the aquatic environment, the mangrove forests, the basic nurseries for all aquatic species have been negatively impacted. Niger Delta mangroves have the highest rate of depletion in the world (FAO, 2005). Light crude, produced, in the region impacts more adversely on mangroves than heavy crude (Proffitt et al., 1995; Duke et al., 2000) and regeneration of impacted mangroves take about 20 years (Duke and Burns, 1999). Unabated oil spills have led to poor water quality in the region. Studies have shown that poor water quality impacts on species composition, assemblages and distribution of fish

(Dance and Hynes, 1980; Boney, 1983; Kutty, 1987; Jones, 1987; Hart and Zabbey, 2005). All these have resulted in reduced fish stocks, reduced fish catches and virtual extinction of certain fauna in the Niger Delta. Furthermore, poor water quality often gives rise to high concentration of heavy metals (lead, copper, zinc) in water. The Niger Delta it seems is no exception. Common fish species in the region have been shown to bio-accumulate heavy metals at levels toxic to humans. These include tilapia (Godwin et al., 2011), bonga shad (Etesin and Nsikak, 2007), cat fish (Wegwu and Akaniwor, 2006), shrimp (Opuene, and Agbozu, 2008) among others.

On land, the impacts of oil pollution are no less deleterious. Udo and Fayemi (1975) showed that crude oil pollution reduces the germination of maize crop by 50% and yield by 92%. The impacts of oil spills are long lasting (Ekekwe, 1983) as impacted areas are still unsuitable for farming over two decades later (Frynas, 2000:169). According to Inoni et al. (2006) this has depressed crops yield and income for farmers, as oil spill of about 10% reduces crop yield by about 1.5% and income by over 5%. Several studies have also linked gas flaring to decline in agricultural produce in the Niger Delta (Alakpadia, 2000; Daudu, 2001). Indeed, Salau (1993) and Adeyemo (2002) reported a 10% decrease in crop yield at a distance of 1000 metres, 45% decrease at a distance of 600 metres and 100% loss of yield at a distance of 200 metres from a gas flare sites. Gas flaring has also been associated with highly reduced yield in sweet potato (Udoinyang, 2005); cassava/yam (Odjugo, 2007); melon, a popular seed vegetable by 85.7, 82.1, 75 and 32% at 500, 1, 2 and 5 km, respectively (Odjugo, 2010). Women in the Niger Delta do most of the fishing in shallow coastal waters and also do most of the farming for food crops in the Niger Delta. It could be clearly seen therefore that women bear the most of the indirect impacts of oil activities; reduced fish catches, reduced crop yield and hence income or denial of access due to pollution. It is obvious from the foregoing that the women's dependence on the environment (land or water) for their livelihoods have acutely stultified and constricted by oil activities in the Niger Delta. Thus, faced with no alternatives due to limited education, women in the Niger Delta have no other space to manoeuvre, hence their combative reactionism to oil activities in defence of the environment.

Women's combative reactionism in the Niger Delta

Since the advent of oil as a source of power in Nigeria, its social relations of production have tended to alienate local people with women mostly affected. In addition, the interaction between the oil companies and their host communities breeds a variety of contradictions that reflect

the contour of power that enriches the global community, while impoverishing local people especially women. Women have been alienated from the social relations of oil production and have been hardest hit by environmental impacts of oil activities (UNDP, 2002). In farming and fishing especially, oil activities with associated pollution have constricted the economic space for women. Furthermore, the politics of oil and its commoditisation of the environment also exclude the rural women from its labour needs, as, they are often, not accorded formal education (Turner and Oshare, 1993). Thus, the power relations spawned by oil politics, subject women to "relations of exclusion" that is also reflective of the Niger Delta environment. This has fed into resistance, through which local women have blocked global extraction until it attends to local demands for restitution. Protests by women groups in oil-host communities against the activities of the oil multinationals in the Niger Delta began in Ogharefe in 1984 against a US oil company Pan Ocean (Turcotte, 2002:1). The objectives of the protest like all others that later followed in the Niger Delta were predicated on the women's demands for oil companies to improve the economic, environmental, and social conditions of the oil-host communities. These demands surrounded issues of employment and the provision of social amenities:- roads, water, health facilities and electricity. When Pan Ocean failed to answer them, a mass of singing and dancing women laid siege on the company, halting their operations (Turner and Oshare, 1993; Lewis, 1998; Turcotte, 2002:1-3, 15-16, 35). Upon hearing that the managing director of the company had arrived from Lagos, the women removed all their clothes. The sight of thousands of naked women of all ages was too much for the visiting official who immediately fled the area. The demands of the women were met almost immediately by the company. This protest stimulated other women oil-related protests:- Ekpan, Escravos, Warri.

The Ekpan women's Revolt

Historically, lands are owned and controlled by men in the Niger Delta, and due to the topography land is scarce. As a result, women have intensely struggled to access farms or fishing areas. Oil activities have exerted further pressure by its virtual sequester of most lands for oil production and erection of processing facilities that are built on erstwhile arable lands and fishing grounds. This has exerted acute pressure on agricultural practices; farming and fishing (Hutchful, 1985:51; Turner and Badru, 1985). This has been further exacerbated by the operational methods of the oil companies that have severely damaged the environment; harming agricultural practices. Thus, as it were, with their backs turned to the wall, the women violently reacted to the harrowing situation foisted

on them by oil activities.

On Monday, August 25, 1986, at 5 a.m., a large crowd of women protesters estimated at about 10,000 from Uvwie clan overwhelmed the premises of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Refinery, Petrochemicals Plant and the Pipelines and Products Marketing Pump station, all located at Ekpan. The throng was made up of women of all age groups including the very old (Daily Times (Nigeria), August 28, 1986:3; Sunday Telegraph (Warri), August 31, 1986:1). The women who were chanting war songs carried placards some of which read: "Give us Social Amenities," "Review all forms of employment within the Petrochemical," and "Our sons, daughters and husbands are qualified for key posts within the Petrochemical" (Daily Times (Nigeria), August 28, 1986:3). They also demanded preferential employment opportunities for their people threatening mass stripping if their demands were not met. Thousands of the women attempted to break into the premises of the Petrochemicals Plant. The women blocked all access routes to the three projects, while their men laid ambush armed with "dangerous" weapons, with "possible attack in mind should the women be molested" (Sunday Telegraph (Warri), August 31, 1986). All activities at the sites of the three projects were halted. Workers could not reach their offices. Large numbers of tankers were prevented from loading fuel for distribution to filling stations. A team of men from the Nigerian Police Force led by CSP G.A. Olatunbosun was unable to disperse the angry women (Sunday Telegraph (Warri), August 31, 1986).

It was not until about 2:30 p.m. that the women agreed to hold discussions with a management team from NNPC, made up of the managers of the affected companies. The women who denied access to the meeting to all men from the community were represented by three of the leaders. The meeting was adjourned at about 7 p.m. after over four hours to enable the NNPC team meet with its Managing Director and the Federal Minister of Petroleum Resources. The women continued their barricade while the meeting lasted, thus crippling oil operations in the region for the whole day. The women demanded feedback and positive response within two weeks failing which they would resume their action. Exactly two weeks later on Monday, September 8, 1986, the next meeting took place between the NNPC and the Uvwie community at the Uvwie King's Palace in Effurun. However, unlike the first meeting of August 25, 1986 Uvwie Community representation was male dominated; composed of seven chiefs, one evangelist and two women. As Ihonybere (1991) opines, this male encapsulation of women's struggles implies the takeover of corruption and loss of the political content of women's struggles to the economic interests of chiefs and elites. It was indeed revealed during the meeting that the King and his chiefs had enjoyed patronages without the knowledge of the people (Oshare, 1986). The meeting ended with the NNPC

promising to embark on aggressive community development with greater collaboration to avoid future confrontations. It was under this seemingly success by the Ekpan women that the combined Ijaw and Itsekiri women protest took place in Escravos.

Ijaw and Itsekiri women's protest

The situation at Ekpan is also true for oil-host communities in the Niger Delta. But for the Ijaw and Itsekiri communities near Chevron's Escravos, export terminal their situation got worsened when besides fishing and farming, oil pollution also deprived them of clean water. For women, this meant increased burden as they have to trek even longer distance to get water. All appeals to Chevron for help fell on deaf ears. Thus, in 2002, Ijaw and Itsekiri women staged a mass protest against Chevron (INDYMEDIA, 2002:1-3; Okpowo and Adebayo, 2002:1-4; A.I, 2003:1-9).

This protest was considered most remarkable of all women protests against the foreign oil multinationals in the region due to the international media attention it received and its 10 day long duration coupled with the threat of the women to strip naked (Branigan and Vidal, 2002:8).

About three hundred Ijaw and Itsekiri women, angry at the lack of employment, lack of infrastructure and environmental despoliation by the oil multinational, (TWNF, 2002) occupied Chevron's exploration site. Around the same time, women from Ilaje and also some others from Ijaw and Itsekiri paralysed activities at the operational headquarters of Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC). To persuade the women to vacate the site, Chevron made a pledged to improve community development, promised employment to 25 people for five years and economic empowerment through the set-up of poultrys and fish farms (Branigan and Vidal, 2002:8).

These promises were never kept by the oil company, and social conditions in the region continue to worsen. In 2003, the women again protested with about 600 women of various ages besieging the oil facilities; taking about 700 oil workers of various nationalities hostage (Jesudasan, 2003:1-2).

As in all previous protests, the demands of the women centred on employment for their husbands, children and economic empowerment in the face of livelihood displacement due to the negative effects of oil activities (Jesudasan, 2003).

This time some of their demands were met, thus, some success was achieved by the women. However, as we shall see, this was the last time that women mass protests achieved any success.

Women protests and repression

So far, mass protests by women because of the promises

they exerted albeit tokens were regarded as successful. However, not all women mass protests were and by the late 1990s matters changed. It seems that the success of earlier women's protests were due to certain factors:- non involvement of the state, circumstances (Pan Ocean was indebted to the state at the time), international media exposure (the threat of stripping focused the world media on the Chevron siege) and perhaps, dependent on the company involved and volume of oil produced. This last point appears to be of relevance as the state appears to be extremely sensitive and responds to protests with severe repression where Shell is the target. Indeed it could be argued that as pioneer and the highest crude oil producer (about 45%), Shell is privileged by the Nigeria state. This is exemplified by strong arm response of the state to issues involving Shell peaceful or violent environment.

The repressive tendency of the state to protests targeting Shell can be seen by a Shell flow station manager's directive to security services to quell a peaceful protest at Umuechem that resulted in the burning and looting of over 495 houses and the death of over 80 persons (mostly women and children) in 1990 (Ibeanu, 2000). This was also the case at Choba in 1993 where security services at Shell's directive quelled a peaceful protest by razing houses, destroying several properties and capping it by raping of over 30 females (mostly girls). In like manner Shell was also at the centre of the crisis involving some communities that led to the unprovoked Joint Military Task Force (JTF) attack on Odioma in 2005 that destroyed the town, killed 750 persons (women and children), while over 3000 others were arrested (Torulagha, 2005). Whilst it may be argued that women were not specially targeted in these operations, what is not in doubt is the fact that the oil companies became rather very vicious in their response to women mass protests, with the active support as it were of the state. This point is illustrated with two women mass protests in Warri involving Shell and Chevron in 2002.

Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo women's protest

On August 8, 2002, over 3000 women from the three ethnic groups in Warri; Urhobo, Ijaw and Itsekiri for the first time simultaneously carried out peaceful protests at the gates of the operational headquarters of the two major oil companies in Warri, Shell and Chevron. The protesting women arrived at the gates of the operational headquarters of both companies at about 6:30am and calmly sat on the ground. They waited quietly for an address by the oil companies' officials but they were ignored. At about 6.30p.m, over 12 h after the women arrived at the gate of both companies, a joint team of soldiers and mobile policemen arrived simultaneously at both companies and started to beat up the women

without any provocation, warning nor where they given any time to disperse. The security forces launched the attack throwing tear gas and shooting sporadically in the air. The combined forces of the security services came towards the gates of Shell from inside the company premises and threw tear gas at the women, while shooting rapidly as they approached. When they got to where the women were sitting, which included elderly women and women with babies strapped on their backs they began to whip, kick and beat them with "koboko" (a whip made of twisted animal skin) and the butts of their guns.

No official from either of the oil companies, Shell or Chevron consented to discuss with the women during the period of the peaceful protest. The women were simply brutally dispersed without an opportunity to dialogue with the representatives of the companies. Firsthand account of the incidents detailed the brutality:

"One 70 years old protester named Titi Omafor was caught at the gate of Shell by one soldier who started shaking her violently, while at the same time kicking her viciously on both her legs. After the beating she was dumped on the ground, where she laid helplessly unable to move her lower limbs. She was found later by some younger women who managed to spirit her away from the scene and took her to an herbal home for treatment, as she was unable to afford normal hospital fee. Mama like the other women heard no warning prior to the brutal attack".

"One of the women that took part in the protest at Chevron gate was a 45 years old Itsekiri community women leader named Elisabeth Ebido. She was repeated beaten by four members of the combined security forces deployed to Chevron with the butt of their guns. At a point, one soldier held her very tightly while another whipped her viciously. Later, she was knocked to the ground where the whipping continued while at the same time she was ordered to run. According to the one soldier, she was selected for special VIP treatment because she was one of the leaders of the women".

It may be argued that Shell, due to its colonial origin and pioneer status, has been repressive and exploitative in its relation with the people of the oil-host communities; thus, its treatment of the women narrated above is not strange. However, the same cannot be said of the behaviour of Chevron that in the past amicably settled with women protesters, as was the case with the women protesters at Escravos. We can therefore, see clearly that the oil companies became rather very vicious in their response to women mass protests after some initial successes.

Concluding remarks

Women's protests in the Niger Delta signalled the onset

of resistance against oil activities in the Niger Delta. Though initial protests were successful, later protests were brutally repressed. Women protests arose from constriction of their means of livelihoods by environmental despoliation from oil activities. Women constitute the bulk of the marginalised, landless, least educated and resource-poor members of society. Thus, as providers for the family and lacking education women rely mostly on the environment for the family food needs and also to earn some income. Agriculture, fishing and related activities constitute their major sources of livelihood in the Niger Delta. Therefore, for the women, the environment is a natural asset and livelihood building block that is vital for sustaining the family. As a result, environmental despoliation has meant for women acute hardship; high level of poverty and diseases. This has accounted for the combative reactionism of women to oil activities in the Niger Delta, because the nexus between environment, agriculture and livelihood in the Niger Delta represents an important variable in the context of survival of the people.

Notes

1. In the United States and elsewhere, produced water is either reinjected for recovery or into disposal wells and drilling mud land filled by the oil companies. However, in the Niger Delta, oil companies constantly dispose of wastes from oil drilling directly into fresh-water bodies (Nwankwo and Irechuwu, 1981). Also, no Environmental Assessment Impact (EIA) is carried out before pipelines are laid in the Niger Delta (Greenpeace, 1994). However, for its pipeline from Stanlow in Cheshire to Moss Moran in Scotland, 17 different environmental surveys were commissioned by Shell even before a single turf was cut... A detailed Environmental Assessment Impact (EIA) covered every length of the (pipeline) route. Also, besides taking measures to avoid lasting disfigurement, the route was diverted severally to accommodate environmental concerns (Greenpeace, 1994). It has thus, been argued that the oil companies' excesses in the Niger Delta are due to their alliance with the Nigerian state. For more on the activities of oil companies and their unholy alliance with successive military and civilian regimes, see *Where Vultures Feast* (Okonta and Douglas, 2001) and *Green Backlash* (Rowell, 1996). Further information can also be found at www.seen.org and *Project Underground* at www.moles.org.

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Review

Regionalism and sub-regionalism: A theoretical framework with special reference to India

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Regionalism and sub-regionalism are at present a fairly widespread phenomenon in Indian political system. As the various developmental programs are carried out, regional disparities are already becoming more marked and widespread engendering a sense of cumulative deprivations in the people of certain regions. This, coupled with increasing politicisation in the community, is sure to impart sharper focus to regionalism which would emerge more prominently as a factor of significance in Indian polity. Further, internal self-determination has remained the predominant form in which regionalism and sub-regionalism has sought to express itself. However, an attempt has been made in this paper to focus on the theoretical perspectives of regionalism and to find out how far and to what extent regionalism and sub-regionalism poses a challenge to the national politics in India asserting autonomy and self-determination and what are the basic factors influencing regionalism and sub-regionalism in the sub-continent. The paper concludes with some recent issues of regionalism in different parts of the country.

Key words: Regionalism, sub-regionalism, autonomy, identity, internal colonialism.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of regionalism and sub-regionalism has attracted immense attention of the academia as well as researchers in contemporary international relations. This is due to the fact that the enduring pursuit of regionalism and sub-regionalism has an underpinning thrust on peace, security and development through exploration, identification and gradual intensification of trade, economic and cultural ties among the geographically contiguous areas. Regionalism has gained prominence in the 21st century, not only as a form of economic, political and social organization, but also as a field of study. The debate on rise of regionalism shows that we need to have a clear understanding of what we mean by regionalism and how can we explain it. Regionalism is an ideology and political movement that seeks to advance the causes of regions. But it is necessary, at the very outset, to distinguish two quite different meanings of the term

regionalism. At the international level, regionalism refers to transnational cooperation to achieve a common goal or resolve a shared problem or it refers to a group of countries, such as Western Europe, the Western Balkans, or Southeast Asia, that are linked by geography, history or economic features. Used in this sense, regionalism refers to attempts to reinforce the links between these countries. Today, the foremost example of such an attempt is the European Union (EU) (Bevir, 2009).

The second meaning of the term is regionalism refers to a process in which sub-state actors become increasingly powerful and independent of the state: power devolves from the central state to regional governments within it. In other words, it refers to a territory that is located within, or sometimes across the borders of a nation state. In this sense, different kinds of regions may be distinguished: political regions, which usually possess

some form of elected regional government; administrative regions, which are geographical entities created for the purpose of administering a service such as a health region or an electricity region; geographical regions, which refer to geographical feature, such as mountain regions, island regions, coastal or maritime regions; and, finally, economic regions, such as agricultural, industrial or declining industrial regions. As a general rule, the political or administrative regions refer to levels of government or administration immediately below the national level (Loughlin, 2007:939).

While discussing regionalism, it is of special importance to have a glance at 'regimes, regionalism and regional integration'¹ which are closely related to each other in the sense that both regionalism and regional integration can develop in a certain kind of regimes. Liberal institutionalists and realists are engaged in a major debate about the role played by regimes- delineated areas of rule-governed activity- in the international system. Both schools acknowledged that although the international system is anarchic (without a ruler) in structure, it has never been anomic (without rules). It is in this sense that a regime can be simply understood as the form of government: a set of rules, cultural or social norms that regulate the operation of government and its interaction with society; and regional integration is a process in which states enter into a regional agreement in order to enhance regional cooperation through regional institutions and rules. Integration schemes usually involve a certain degree of joint decision-making and the creation of common institutions. As such they all involve the creation of regional international regimes. Krasner (1983) defines regimes as 'a set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations' Scholarship on regionalism and regional integration in recent years has included two main groups of scholars, i.e., those who were 'strongly influenced by neo-liberal institutionalism and regime theory' and those falling into the group referred to as 'new regionalism' (Acharya and Johnson, 2007:9).

However, it is in this context that the paper first discussed the theoretical and historical perspectives of regionalism in international system and then taking insights from this theoretical and historical experience, it tried to highlight on the recent trends of regionalism in India. For this purpose, the available literature in these areas can be divided into two groups. In this regard, on the one hand, a very vast body of literature exists explaining the various dimensions of regionalism in international sphere including the concept of regionalism, theoretical perspectives of regionalism, the emergence and historical development of regionalism and regionalism in different contexts (Nye, 1968; Hurrell, 1995, 2003; Fawcett, 2004, 2008; Russett, 1967; Mansfield and Milner, 1997; Hänggi, 2000; Yi, 2007; Börzell, 2011; Travers, 2004 etc.). The 1980s saw a resurrection of

regionalism. The body of literature on this last cycle of regionalism is immense (Palmer, 1991; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995; Mansfield and Milner, 1999; Hettne, 2002; Hettne et al., 1999-2001; Telò 2001; Vayrynen, 2003) which reflects a renovated academic interest in the subject.

On the other hand, the available literature on regionalism in Indian context defines this concept in different ways. Scholars like Paul R.Brass² and Rasheeduddin Khan³ have viewed regionalism in terms of federalism and centre-state relations. But regionalism is a complex phenomenon and to look at it either as a movement for greater autonomy or as a reaction against federal administrative imbalances. Another perspective emerges from the writings of Duncan B.Forrester, who draws a distinction between regionalism and sub-regionalism purely in terms of the size of the area covered by the two. This position cannot be accepted because size of a region cannot be the criterion for regionalism and regional movements (Forrester, 1970). Academic writings on regionalism also reflect a trend towards viewing political parties as catalysts of regional consciousness (Fickett, 1971:5). It may be argued, however, that political parties are not always indispensable to the politics of regionalism because movements of various kinds are often found to be quite capable of articulating regional sentiments on behalf of the people of any region. Another perspective on regionalism seeks to explain this phenomenon in terms of elite conflict (Sharma, 1983). But the argument that all regional demands emanate from elite conflict cannot be substantiated. A very significant approach towards regionalism has been developed by Michael Hechter and has come to be known as the 'Internal Colonial Model'. Hechter's contention is that regionalism is the outcome of real or perceived sense of 'Internal Colonialism' (Hechter, 1975). The essence of the internal colonial model is that the relationship between members of core communities and the peripheral communities in a state are characterised by exploitation (Birch, 1978). It is this real or perceived sense of exploitation that seems to lie at the core of regionalism. Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in studies on the issues of regionalism and regional movements in the context of the federal democracy in India. These studies seek to unravel the process whereby the regions emerge with geographical, cultural and political spaces getting sharpened and defined in terms of collective identities as democracy gets rooted in a decentralizing India (Majeed, 1984; Kumar, 2000a, 2000b; Prakash, 2001; Jenkins, 2004). There are also other studies which are related to different issues in different regions: these include the emergence of new social movements in different states (Brass, 1997), emergence of caste and ethnic identity (Jaffrelot, 2003). In all of these studies, however, there lacks a clarity of how regionalism in terms of region, ethnic identity, culture, religion, caste and class poses a challenge to the Indian Federation; this paper tries to look

into these matters.

REGIONALISM IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Regionalism has various dimensions and thus a conceptual clarification of the terms like region, regionalism regionalization, regional cooperation and regional integration is very essential. Etymologically speaking, 'region' derives from the Latin word *regio*, which refers to an administrative area or broad geographical area distinguished by similar features. History tells us that 'region' not only has a geographical but also a political connotation (Travers, 2004; Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003). A scrutiny of the literature indicates that four different dimensions are touched upon at varying degrees of intensity: 1) geography, 2) regularity and intensity of interactions, 3) shared regional perceptions, and 4) agency (Travers, 2004). Lagenhove (2003) transcends this discussion on the conceptualization of region by introducing the concept of 'regionhood' and 'regionality'. The first, which is what distinguishes regions from non-regions, is characterized by: 1) the region as a system of international acts in the international and national arena, 2) the region as a 'rational' system with statehood properties, 3) the region as a reciprocal achievement, and 4) the region as a generator and communicator of meaning and identity. Complementarily, 'regionality' is the suitable historical, geographical, economic, cultural and social conditions that encase a region (cited in Travers, 2004). In a general sense, we can say that regions, on the one hand, are territories within a state, occasionally crossing state borders. On the other hand, regions are particular areas of the world, covering a number of different sovereign states.

There is no commonly accepted definition of what a region is. Most would agree that a region implies some "geographical proximity and contiguity" (Hurrell, 1995:353) and mutual interdependence (Nye, 1965: vii). Some would add a certain degree of cultural homogeneity (Russett, 1967), sense of community (Deutsch et al., 1957) or "regionness" (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000). Regionalism, then, refers to processes and structures of region-building in terms of closer economic, political, security and socio-cultural linkages between states and societies that geographically proximate. In political science, regionalism is often used synonymous with regional cooperation and regional integration, which could be seen as the opposite ends of a continuum along which regionalism may vary.⁴

A distinction may be made between regionalism and regionalization. Regionalism refers to a political project, pushed toward by purposive actors, especially states, intent on realizing a region at the sub-global level. Whether that sub-global level is a "region" or "not" is a subjective and contested question, not an objective of activity in geographic space. Regionalization, on the

other hand, is a dynamic process of interactions set in motion by non-purposive actors, such as multi-national actors (MNCs), in this case intent on realizing a profit not a region. According to Breslin and Higgot, regionalism refers to the political process in which states derive cooperative initiatives. Regionalization, by contrast, refers to process of economic integration which, while it may be influenced by state policies, is essentially the un-coordinated consequence of private sector activities (Breslin and Higgot, 2000).

When considering the different kinds which are agreed upon by countries, a distinction is often made between 'cooperation' and 'integration'. Regional cooperation has various forms. Functional cooperation refers to limited arrangements which are agreed upon between states in order to work together in particular areas, for example, in transport, energy or health. Economic cooperation refers to agreements which foresee some degree of commercial preferentialism, but with no harmonization of domestic rules or any obligation for common action in international affairs. Political cooperation entails mutual support and commitment regarding the implementation of certain values and practices within the countries. As stated before, formal integration refers to processes by which states go beyond the removal of obstacles to interaction between their countries and create a regional space subject to some distinct common rules. With regard to economic integration, several degrees of ambition are usually distinguished: free trade area, customs union, common market, economic and monetary union (Baylis et al., 2008:436).

Regionalism in global context

As regionalism is a global phenomenon, examples of regional organizations may be found in Europe, the America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. In Europe, the European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1953 between France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries, initiated the process of European integration and led to the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1958, which established the European Community (EEC). By 1992, the Maastricht Treaty on European Monetary and Political Union was adopted, and by 1993, the Community was formally known as the European Union to signify the level of integration that it had achieved (encompassing most of the countries in Western Europe by that point). In the Americas, including Mercosur (the Mercado Común del Sur or the Southern Common Market), the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Bolivia and the Chile are associate members), and the North American Free Trade agreement (NAFTA), Canada, Mexico, and the United States are among such organisations on the constituent of Africa; the Southern African Development Community (SADC), consisting of the countries in its southern cone,

was relaunched in 1992 to promote economic and social development objectives. Finally, in Asia and the Pacific, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which encompasses most of the countries of South East Asia and intends to promote regional political stability as well as economic development, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) are just two examples. APEC, which was formed in 1989 to promote open free-trade and investment, includes as its members the countries of ASEAN and spans the Pacific to include the Japan, South Korea, China, Russia, Taiwan, Hongkong, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the United States, Mexico, Chile and Peru (Buzdugan, 2007:812).

APPROACHES TO REGIONALISM

In order to explain, describe or explore the subject of regionalism numerous approaches and theories were generated within International Relations (IR) or International Political Economy (IPE) over the years. The body of literature is so extensive that some authors have recently endeavoured to compile and compartmentalize the theoretical landscape. A first systemic attempt, done by Hurrell (1995) divides up all the approaches into systematic theories (neorealism, structural interdependence and globalization), regional and interdependence theories (neo-functionalism, neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism) and finally, domestic level theories (regionalism and state coherence, regime type and democratization and convergence theories). Schulz et al. (1999) presented four approaches (neorealism, functionalism and institutionalism, regional economic integration and the new regionalist approach). Mattli (1999) classified the approaches into two groups: political science approaches (functionalism, neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism) and economic approaches (customs union theory, optimal currency area and fiscal federalism).

What follows from the above theories or approaches? Let us look at some major approaches to regionalism.

a) Neofunctionalism: Neofunctionalism has played a central role in the development of theories of European integration. Neofunctionalists argued that high and rising levels of interdependence would set in motion an ongoing process of cooperation that would lead eventually to political integration. Supranational institutions were seen as the most effective means of solving common problems, beginning with technical and non-controversial issues, but 'spilling over' into the realm of high politics and leading to a redefinition of group identity around the regional level (Hurrell, 1995:348).

Neofunctionalist interpretations of regional integration retained the thrust of the functionalist approach, which is that cooperation between nation-states begins with low

level economic and social cooperation, but then shifted their analytical focus from the international to regional and introduced a utilitarian framework to describe the motives of rational political actors. As such, the neo-functional perspective seeks to understand and explain why sovereign nation-states choose to integrate in such a manner as to exchange aspects of their sovereignty for the authority of regional institutions. Proponents of this view argue that the explanation lies in the concept of 'spill over' and the interests of national and supranational political actors. Through the interdependence inherent in the various sectors of modern economies, integration in one sector 'spills over' into other sectors and necessarily leads to sectoral integration. Furthermore, due to the interwoven nature of the economic and political spheres, according to this argument, functional and political spill over induces the processes of regional integration to take place. The result is that supranational regional institutions are created with the jurisdiction over their member states to facilitate these integrative functions.

b) Neoliberal institutionalism: Neoliberal institutionalism has been the most influential theoretical approach to the recent study of international cooperation and presents a highly plausible and generalizable theory for understanding the resurgence of regionalism. Neoliberal institutionalists emphasize the role of institutions in the formation of regional organization. These institutions, it is argued, lower the transaction costs of increase cooperation and thus satisfy the demand of increased interconnectedness at the regional level. Unlike neo-functionalists, neoliberal institutionalists focus their analyses on the state as a rational actor in an anarchical system of states. From this perspective, states seek long-term, absolute gains from cooperation and are discouraged by the actions of states that seek to cheat or defect from their mutual obligations. Regional institutions, it is argued, may provide the transparency, unified expectations, and the mechanisms to inhibit cheating through their coordination role at the supranational level. Thus, for neoliberal institutionalists, as with Neofunctionalists, the creation of regional institutions depends on the benefits of cooperation accorded to the regional actors involved. Therefore, these regional institutions are subject to the actions of states and motivated by internal political interest groups and domestic political objectives. The success and longevity of these regional institutions, then, depend on their ability to successfully carry out their coordinating and problem-solving functions.

c) Neorealism: On one level, regional cooperation has often seemed to pose a direct challenge to realism. The appearance of 'islands of peace and cooperation' in what was commonly viewed as an inherently conflictual world dominated by the struggle for power was widely seen in the 1950s as an anomaly was incapable of explaining. Indeed much of the early work on regionalism and regional integration can be seen as an attempt to shed light on this apparent anomaly. Yet, neorealism can in

fact tell us a number of very important things about regionalism (Hurrell, 1995:339).

Neorealist accounts of regionalism, however, while also shifting analytical focus to states as rational actors in an anarchical international system, argue that integration is dependent on their concern for their own security from external threats. Within this context, neorealists emphasize several key criteria with regard to the possibilities and rationale of integration. The underlying constraint to integration, unlike cheating or defection in institutionalist explanations, is that of the relative gains and losses of the states involved. As states are concerned with the relative gains from cooperation, an uneven distribution of gains, where some states experience losses relative to others, will affect their security and hinder efforts to form and maintain regional arrangements. In addition, the role of a hegemonic power (a state with the military and economic resources, as well as the impetus to impose order- both at the global and regional level) may affect the creation and dynamics of regional institutions. Some neorealist arguments point toward the creation of regional economic blocs in the face of the decline in power of a global hegemon, while others have emphasized the role that a hegemonic state may play in strengthening economic and military relations among smaller and medium-sized states (Buzdugan, 2007:810).

d) Constructivism: Constructivist theories focus on regional awareness and regional integrity, on the shared sense of belonging to a particular regional community, and on what has been called 'cognitive regionalism'. They stress the extent to which *regional cohesion* depends on a sustained and durable sense of community based on mutual responsiveness, trust and high levels of what might be called 'cognitive interdependence' (Hurrell, 1995:352). There are two main variants that are relevant to the study of regionalism. The first derives very centrally and directly from Deutsch's original work on integration. It involves a view of evolving community that stresses two central ideas. First, the character of inter-state (or more accurately for Deutsch, inter-societal) relations within such a community can (and should be) understood in terms of a sense of community, 'we-ness', mutual sympathy, loyalty and shared identity. This in turn is likely to be based on shared principles, collectively held norms and common understandings, rather than on expediency or a temporary conjunction of short term interests. And second, the process by which such a community emerges is related in some way to the compatibility of major societal values (especially capitalism and liberal democracy), and to processes of social communication based on an increase in the level of transactions between two or more societies (hence the label 'transactionalism') [cited in Hurrell, 1995].

The second variant rejects the rigidity of the linkage in Deutsch's work between transaction and identity and the behaviouralist methodologies that underpin it, but

upholds the fundamental importance of understanding the processes by which new communities are created and sustained. This involves a number of central ideas: first, that, in contrast to rationalist theories, we need to pay far more attention to the processes by which both interests and identities are created and evolve, to the ways in which self-images interact with changing material incentives, and to the language and discourse through which these understandings are expressed; second, that it matters how actors interpret the world and how their understandings of 'where they belong' are formed; and third, that both interests and identities are shaped by particular histories and cultures, by domestic factors and by ongoing processes of interaction with each other (ibid.).

Instead of focussing solely on material incentives, constructivists emphasize the importance of shared knowledge, learning, ideational forces, and normative and institutional structures. They claim that understanding inter-subjective structures allows us to trace the ways in which interests and identities change over time and new forms of cooperation and community can emerge (ibid.-353).

However, all these theoretical arguments – whether rationalist or institutionalist- and those that take the nature of the international system as a starting point, offer the most important insights into the start-up, growth and functions of regional institutions. More 'region specific' theories, whether those designed to explain European integration (Neofunctionalism or neoliberal institutionalism or neorealism), or those that take regional ideas and identities as a point of departure (constructivism), provide useful nuance in explaining regional choices and differences.

REGIONALISM IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The emergence of regionalism must be placed in a broader historical perspective, including three waves of regionalism during the twentieth century. The world experienced the tragedy of both an aggressive nationalism and an imperial regionalism during the inter-war period. The international economy was characterized by the crucial fact that the British-centred hegemonic multilateral stability came to an end, which was already perceptible *in nuce* with the consequence of the Great Depression of 1873 and the Age Empires. The crisis publicly crashed with the First World War and the international system came to its demise in August 1931, with the end of the Gold Standard's basis for the pound being one of the direct consequences of the Great Depression of 1929. After the failure of the International Economic Conference in 1933, it was finally realized that the UK could no longer play the role of hegemonic power and that the US could not, as yet, take over the role. The end of the long era of the self-regulated market and of

free trade was an international event. The American economic crash of 1929 had a huge global impact. It undermined the apparent economic boom of the 1920s, which J.M. Keynes had warned of ten years earlier, in *The Economic Consequences of Peace*. International economics shifted from open trade order and the first seeds of international liberalization (including the Most Favoured Nation Clause, MFN) to state protectionism, discriminatory and regionalist imperialisms (cited in Telò, 2001).

The parallel crisis in the fragile League of Nations peace system, the breakdown of the first steps towards a farseeing European unity design, namely the Briand-Stresemann dialogue, and the parallel Japanese expansion in East Asia, heralded the end of the first attempt to construct a modern multilateral collective security system able to cope with the challenges of the twentieth century. During the 1930s and the early 1940s, the world experienced the difficult times of both economic and political 'malevolent regionalism', as a result of German and Japanese attempts to become regional hegemonic powers. The military and fascist regimes of Japan and Germany replaced the former 'pax-Britannica', holder of a cooperative king of balance of power, with new conflicts for regional domination, in Asia/Pacific and Europe respectively, provoking the outbreak of the Second World War (ibid.).

It is in this context that Fawcett (2004)⁵ divided the historical development of regionalism into three waves: I) Regional Institutions: The First Wave 1945-1965, II) Regionalism: The Second Wave, 1965-1985, and III) Regionalism: The Third Wave, 1985-Present.

I. Despite such negative impressions, the spirit of regionalism was quickly revised and strengthened against the backdrop of the ending of the Second World War and the creation of a new set of international institutions, notably the United Nations and Bretton Woods/GATT system. Three main types of regional institution can be identified in this period. First, what are often called 'multipurpose' institutions like the League of Arab States (LAS), the Organization of American States (OAS), successor to the Inter-American system and the Organization of African Unity (OAU); second, security alliances like NATO and the Warsaw Pact; and third, institutions with a principally economic focus, notably the early European institutions and later attempts to replicate them elsewhere.

Institutions of the second type, regional security alliances, notably NATO, the Warsaw Pact, SEATO, CENTO, and ANZUS, were established in the 1950s. Rather than the UN-friendly institutions envisaged by the Charter, these alliances owed their rationale more to the evolving Cold War system and corresponding attempts by the superpowers to consolidate their respective spheres of influence, and as such constituted a blow to multilateralism. What is striking about this first wave of

regionalism, whether in the area of economics or security, was the fact that it was characterized less by any new normatively informed understanding of regional-multilateral relationships, more by strictly material calculations of power, security and interest. Above all it was the post-war balance of power, which quickly became that of the Cold War that represented the overriding factor in determining regionalism's early trajectory.

II. Against this backdrop and with the Cold War entering its third decade, a further and somewhat distinctive round of regional activity took place. This was, in part, a reaction to the superpower dominance of the regional security arena, the disappointing early results of both the multipurpose institutions and non-European economic institutions and the changing regional security environment itself. The second wave of institution building which occurred mainly among developing countries, had an underlying security focus, and hence was clearly distinguishable from the earlier wave of economic regionalism that had been inspired by the creation and successful early years of the EC. It was similar in that it was mostly sub-regionalism scope (with sub-regionalism here meaning sub-continental, or at least encompassing a smaller geographical space and fewer states than the earlier pan-regional groups) though it also included both a pan-European security institution, the CSCE, and a pan-Islamic one, the ICO. The more familiar examples of this second regional wave are the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the South African Development Community (SADC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

III. Just as the international system had closely defined the parameters and possibilities of regionalism during the Cold War, it was system change and its consequences that also help explain the post-Cold War changes and developments. Though arguably more complex and diverse than previous regional waves, the new regionalism was no less a response to the shifting political, economic and security imperatives of the post-Cold War environment in which states now found themselves. On the one hand, the example of Europe, the effects of globalization and uncertainty about the capacity of multilateral institutions all provided incentives to other countries to foster projects of economic integration, notably the creation of free trade areas (FTAs). On the other hand, the removal of Cold War overlay also changed the parameters of the security domain making regional security more vulnerable and accessible to local actors. Like the earlier waves of regionalism, the post-Cold War phenomena, widely dubbed the 'new regionalism- despite its continuities with the old- has been the subject of sustained debate and a growing literature.

Looking across the globe in the aftermath of two major World Wars, peace protagonists started to think that the

fire of regionalism, tribalism, nationalism and racism no more existed. It is because in Europe, there appeared a few signs of regional protests or ethnic and nationalist movements after the Second World War. In America, though regional sentiments persisted, their hold appeared to be weakening and even the smouldering racial feelings seemed latent and inactive. In Asia and Africa, nationalist movements were indeed making their appearances, but they seemed to have grounded on the anti-colonial feeling rather than on regional sentiments. This was having a few exceptions in Burma and Iraq. Even the so called communal differences of South East Asian colonies appeared to be in check (Smith, 1981:8). But such optimism cannot be expected to continue for long. Today, people are realising more and more that the world is plural and multicultural. The so called nation states rarely have ethnically homogenous population. Rather, they are composed of two or more ethnic communities living in an uneasy harmony within the state borders. Large and small states possess sizeable minorities which have their regional problems.

Smith (1981) tries to identify states with large minorities and states with small minorities. States with large minorities include Canada, The United States, Mexico (North American States), Brazil, Peru, Trinidad, Bolivia, Guyana, Paraguay, Ecuador (South American States), Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Cyprus (European States), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Philippines (Asian States), Australia, New Zealand, In Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, the Congo, the Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and many other new states. On the other hand, states which have small minorities are the Frisians in Holland, the Tyrolese and Friulians in Italy, the Capps in Sweden, Karibbeans in Finland, the Gypsies Armenian, Turks, Pomaks, Wailachians, Karakachani, Gagauzi and others in Bulgaria, the Sorbs or Wends of Lusatia in Germany, the Ainu of Japan, the hill people of Northern Thailand, the Saharans of ex-Spanish Sahara incorporated in Morocco and Amerindian minorities in Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Belize. Only few states today can claim to be 'pure' nations with completely homogenous composition. Portugal, Greece, Iceland, Malta, West Germany (except a small population on North Fransians), Norway and Japan (with the exception of Ainu) may be considered homogenous. Even Denmark has Eskimos and Faroese minorities and Austria has its Slovenes. Thus, it is a fact that a very few states of the world are ethnically homogenous and many of them are distinctly polyethnic in composition (ibid.). Many polyethnic states have bent upon rapid national integration. In their desire for social integration, the

leaders of these states generally employ politics of cultural assimilation. As it is known that the new states of Africa and Asia are particularly anxious to counter the fragility and artificiality of state borders by integrating their culturally desperate population. Expecting the fear of balkanization, African leaders especially are keen to counter tribalism and regional movement by turning the members of antipathetic ethnic community into fraternal citizens of the new nation. Unfortunately, the very act of integrating such divided people may be well exacerbated regional antagonism and highlight ethnic solidarities at least in the short run. In fact, the process of state homogenization policies in reinforcing regional cleavages is not confined to the Third World countries. Its effects can be witnessed in the Western and Eastern countries. Pluralism and integration are woven together in a complex nexus and provide the political basis for the increasing salience of regional cleavages today (ibid.-9/10).

The crucial fact is that intra-national regional conflicts have become more intense and complex in the twentieth century. A few countries have been able to avoid serious regional conflicts. There have been ethnic riots in Malaysia, chronic regional antagonism between Burmese, Karen, Shan and Kachin in Burma, the Chinese Ambonese and Achinese in Indonesia, between Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, a war against Huk and Mara guerrillas in the Philippines, region based ethno-national conflicts between Khamers and Vietnamese in Vietnam. The Chinese conflict with Tibetans in Tibetan, Japanese hostilities to Burakumin in Japan and a whole series of regional and linguistic conflicts in India, Pakistan involving Baluchis, Marathis, Bengalis, Andhrans and Pathans. Western Asia too, has witnessed a considerable amount of ethno-regional conflicts notably with Kurds in Iraq and Cyprus, the Turkmen in Iran, the Armenians in Turkey, the Assyrians in Iraq, the Maronite Muslim civil war in Lebanon, the Palestinian conflict, the antagonism of Wahabis and Hiazis in Saudi Arabia, the Dhofaris in Oman and the chronic Middle East conflict itself. In Africa, the best known regional conflicts between Ibo and Hausa in Nigerian Civil War, the Somali Ethiopian conflict which has clear regional dimension, the related Eritrean conflict and the various wars in Congo which involved the Bakongo, Baluba, Lauda and other ethnic groups. But ethno-regional antagonism has surfaced in other African states also. They underline the continuing conflict in Angola, they were prominent in Southern Sudan, they have appeared in Ghana and Togo in the guise of Ewe irredentism and they played a prominent role in Uganda, Zanzibar and of course in South Africa. Most other African states from Rwanda and Burundi to Senegal and Chad have been threatened by regional conflicts. America and Europe have also been spared by regional antagonism (ibid.-10-11).

France, which is regarded as the classic land of political unity and administrative centralization, has experienced

prolonged regionalist movement in the past. The movement aimed at arresting the forces which were at work to make all of France virtually a suburb of Paris. In the year 1960 regionalism found expression in the "Nancy Programme" which demanded that communal matters should be regulated by the commune, regional affairs by the region and matters of national concern by the nation. Demands were generally made for decentralization of powers and balanced economic growth. The movement further involved revival of local dialects, collection of folk songs and publication of many independent local newspapers and periodicals. Thus by 1900 A.D. the movement grew as a serious challenge to the political and administrative set up of France (Mishra, 1984:9).

Regionalism is not altogether unknown in the United States of America, the fourth largest state in the world. The vastness of its size and multiplicity of cultural groups have engendered regional cleavages on many occasions. The civil war between the Northern and Southern States, the latter comprising the area of the old confederacy that fought and was defeated in the civil war, furnishes one of the most remarkable inter-regional cleavages in the history of USA. But it is not the only instance. There have been threats from New England in 1814 for breaking away from the Union. Further, the Middle Western States have an atmosphere of their own; they have their own economic interest and they too, were for a long time in uneasy opposition to the bankers and merchants, the importers and manufacturers of the North-Eastern States (Finer, cited in Mishra, 1984: 10).

The German immigrants inhabiting the sparsely populated plain states, Nebrakas and Dakotas, have "atavistically retained something of a pre-1914 German outlook on foreign affairs" (ibid.). The "Silver States" such as the states of Nevada and Idaho also have their own peculiar problem deriving from their sparse populations and their dependence upon extractive industries.

In Europe, people are accustomed to a strong central government "whose authority over all other institutions in the country is paramount and to which regionalism is not of overriding importance: they tend to think of government as reaching outwards from the centre to the periphery and downwards from top to the base... In the USA, the governmental system starts at the bottom and works up to the top and the top merely caps an already existing edifice. It does not create that edifice, as it often seems to do in the states of Europe" (ibid.-195)

Regionalism makes an interesting study in the new states which may be said to have been passing through a process of reduction of their primordial sentiments to civil order. The reason is obvious. "The transfer of sovereignty from a colonial to an independent one is more than a mere shift of power from foreign hands to native ones; it is a transformation of the whole pattern of political life, a metamorphosis of subjects into citizens"(Geertz, cited in Mishra, 1984:10). In most of these states struggle against the imperial rule was "at ones a reassertion of traditional

values and symbols against alien intrusions and itself an alien modern, untraditional phenomenon" (Owen, cited in Mishra, 1984: 10)

The socio-economic and political change which the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America known as the Third World, face today are very often attributed to the process of modernization, a term used to designate the transformation of society and culture that began in Europe towards the fifteenth century and that by now has engulfed the rest of the mankind. The three major aspects of this change which need to be emphasised are, firstly, "the revolutionary change in the conception of community constituting the state," secondly, the change in the nature of industrial production; and thirdly, the rapid social changes constituting a break in the immediate part (Panikkar, cited in Mishra, 1984:11). In political sphere, the process of modernization is identified with secularisation, participatory democracy, structural differentiation and replacement of ascriptive loyalties to the rulers by achieved loyalties on the basis of elections or other mechanisms of participation (Bhambhri, cited in Mishra, 1984: 11).

REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Recently, India has been witnessing the onset of the democratic processes that have resulted in the reconfiguration of its politics and economics. Among these processes, most significant has been the assertion of identity politics. There have been struggles around the assertiveness and conflicting claims of the identity groups and of struggles amongst them, often fought out on the lines of region, religion, language (even dialect), caste, and community. These struggles have found expressions in the changed mode of electoral representation that has brought the local/regional into focus with the hitherto politically dormant groups and regions finding voices. A more genuinely representative democracy has led to the sharpening of the line of distinction between or among the identity groups and regions (Kumar, 2009:14).

In Indian federalism, centre-state relations have been designed in such a way that the centre is predominantly more powerful than the federal units in legislative, administrative and financial matters. Since independence, the Indian state has addressed the task of coping with the tensions arising in different regions of the country by restoring to a variety of means depending upon the particular facet- economic, political, cultural or linguistic-involved in each specific conflict. The Indian government initiated different initiatives in different periods including the JVC Committee, the Dar Commission, the States Reorganisation Commission, Rajamannar Committee and the Sarkaria Commission in order to overcome the centre-state conflicts and give accommodation to the numerous identity related demands. However, the centre-state relations stand as the root cause of regionalism in

India.

Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since (1947), if not before. Regionalism is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. For many centuries, India remained the land of many lands, regions, cultures and traditions. The country of more than a billion people inhabiting some 3,287, 263sq km. India's broad regions, socio-culturally speaking are distinct from one another. For instance, southern India (the home of Dravidian cultures) which is itself a region of many regions is evidently different from the north, the west, the central and the north-east. Even the east of India is different from the north-east of India comprising today seven constituent units of Indian federation with the largest concentration of tribal peoples. The British colonial division of the Indian Territory broadly between the directly ruled provinces, and some 560 (indirectly-ruled) autocratic princely kingdoms of many sizes, religions, tribes, and languages added complexity to regionalism in India. Even after various phases of territorial reorganization since 1950, most regions of India contain many sub-regions marked by some social and cultural identity symbols (Bhattacharya, 2005). In India, regionalism or the acute sense of loyalty to the particular region manifested itself variously (Ram, 1968; Rao, 1975; Chandra et al., Mathur and Pandey, 1976; Reddy and Sharma, 1979; Mishra, 1984; Wallace, 1985; Das Gupta, 1988; Sarkar, 1991; Mukherjee, 1992, cited in Bhattacharya, 2005:2). It has often expressed itself in antagonistic terms to that of the nation, fuelled as it is by the sense of enduring deprivation due to long-term neglect in development and resource distribution. Regionalism has often expressed itself in terms, which are opposed to national unity and integrity, and challenging to the legitimacy of the state. While the rulers have most often liked to see in regionalism "a very serious threat to the development, progress and unity" (Gandhi: 1969 85), some scholars have expressed similar views by seeing regionalism as "anti-system, anti-federal" and so on (Reddy and Sharma, 1979). But positively oriented scholars have seen values in regionalism in the context of building the nation or national cohesion provided the political system is accommodative of timely meeting the demands of the regions (Mukherjee, 1992:12). The literature on regionalism, its meaning, forms, causes and consequences in India etc are already vast and there is perhaps little to add to clarifying the meaning of regionalism in India, or its forms and content. The basic point that highlights in this respect is that internal self-determination of community, whether linguistic, tribal, religious, regional, or their combinations, has remained the predominant form in which regionalism in India has sought to express itself, historically as well as contemporaneously. Most often, self-determination has

been couched in terms of statehood or state autonomy (Bhattacharya, 2005).

Maheswari (2000) points out that a particular territory is set apart as a region over a period of time, when different variables operate in different degrees. These variables may be geography, topography, religion, language, usage or customs, socio-economic and political stages of development, common historical traditions and experiences, a common way of living and more than anything else, a widely prevalent sentiment of togetherness (we feeling, which differentiates a people from them). In this sense feeling of regional identities can coincide with state boundaries like that in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal etc., there can be in parts of a state like that of Telengana in Andhra Pradesh, Vidharbha in Maharashtra, Darjeeling in West Bengal etc. Or it can also be in parts of more than one state as in Jharkhand (Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal) [Narang, 1985:303-304].

Regionalism, in this sense, can politically be understood as "a search for an intermediate control system between the centre and the periphery for competitive advantage in the national arena". Regional autonomy demands to treat region as coherent units politically having a right to reflect the constituent's aspirations to manage their internal affairs, while making claims on national resources, in competition with other regions. In this competition for resources, language, culture, religion, economic advancement and administrative coherence are used as a basis of identity (ibid.).

Regionalism as a countrywide phenomenon often tends to take the form of well-conceived and well-organised agitations and campaigns. It assumes mainly three forms. According to Iqbal Narain, these are: *First*, supra-state regionalism that is built around and is an expression of group identity of several states which join hands to take a common stand on an issue of mutual interest vis-a-vis another group of states. The group identity thus forged is usually negative in character; it is usually against some other group identity. It is also issue specific in the sense that it is confined to certain matter on which the group would like to take a common and joint stand. It is not at all a case of a total and permanent merger of state identities in the group identity; in fact, rivalries, tensions and even conflicts continue to take place at times even simultaneously with group postures. South vs. North on such issues as language or the location of steel plants or more powers for states illustrates the point. *Secondly*, there is the phenomenon of inter-state regionalism which is coterminous with state boundaries and involves juxtaposing of one or more state identities against another on specific issues which threaten their interest. River water disputes and border disputes like those between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana, Maharashtra and Karnataka can be cited as examples. *Thirdly*, there is the phenomenon of inter-state regionalism, which embodies the quest of a part within a state for self-identity and self-development in positive terms and negatively speaking,

reflects a psyche of deprivation and/or exploitation of a part in relation to other parts of the same state. This type of regionalism is most important, typified by a Vidharbha in Maharashtra, a Saurashtra in Gujarat, a Telengana in Andhra Pradesh, an East UP in Uttar Pradesh or East Rajasthan in Rajasthan etc. (Narain, cited in Narang, 1985:304).

In general regionalism is manifested through four different ways viz. Demand of people of certain areas for secession from the Indian Union, demand of people of certain areas for separate statehood, demand of people of certain union territories for full-fledged statehood, and the demand of certain people for favourable settlement in inter-state disputes (Perumal, cited in Narang, 1985:304) like exclusive utilization or possession of certain areas or natural resources.

BACKGROUND OF REGIONALISM IN INDIA

Regionalism in India has been rooted in India's manifold diversity. India, demographically speaking, is the second largest country (its population a billion over now) after China, and socially and culturally most diverse in the world. India's one billion plus people live today in 28 states (federal units, doubled since the inauguration of the constitution in 1950) and 7 Union Territories (centrally ruled). Formed over many thousand years as a country of immigrants who brought their own cultures and traditions, India's diversity is proverbial. Although predominantly inhabited by the 'Hindus' (over 80 per cent) who are, however, regionally specific, plural in beliefs and practices, and divided by castes and languages, India contains large proportions of Muslims (about 13%) spread over the country with more than a million in as many as 13 states (out of 28), Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains and so on (Bhattacharya, 2005).

The Indian state was confronted with demands for the reorganisation of the states (provinces or federating units) immediately after independence. Upon the recommendation of the States Reorganisation Committee (SRC) of 1953, headed by Fazal Ali, the provinces were recognised on the basis of language. By the 1960s, the provinces seemed to have settled down within the redrawn boundaries. The larger province of Bombay was divided into Marathi-speaking Maharashtra and Gujarati-speaking Gujarat. Punjab was trifurcated into a Punjabi-speaking Punjab, Hindi-speaking Haryana, and Pahari-speaking Himachal Pradesh. The Kannad-speaking areas of Bombay were transferred to the state of Mysore/Karnataka, and similarly, Telugu-speaking areas of the Madras province were transferred to Andhra Pradesh. The linguistic reorganisation looked complete and the first phase of reorganisation of the states within the Indian union was over. Then came the demands for autonomy in the north-eastern region. The aspirations of the tribal groups were soon recognised by the Indian state. The

states of Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya were formed in the late 1970s. The North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) was granted statehood under the name of Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. The restive Nagas and the Mizos, however, were granted statehood only after violent encounters with the Indian state. The Naga insurgency continues until the present day, even after the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1956. The Mizo insurgency subsided after the 1973 agreement which declared the Mizo district of Assam as a Union Territory. Mizoram was later granted full state status after the 1986 agreement with the rebel leader Laldenga (Behuria, 2002:346). However; this did not completely exhaust the aspirations for autonomous administration or statehood by many groups. The cultural differences within the overarching linguistic unity, in many cases, led to demands for statehood within the primarily language-based federating units of the Indian union. The Telengana movement raged on until the 1980s in the less developed Telugu-speaking region in Western Andhra Pradesh, which was under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad and was later merged with the more economically developed, Telugu-speaking, coastal Andhra Pradesh. The less assertive Kosal movement in western Orissa still continues. Similarly, the movements for Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, the Jharkhand movement in Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh, and the movement for Uttaranchal/Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh, have been active since the 1950s until they were granted statehood in 2001. This has led to an intensification of demands for autonomy from other ethnocultural groupings within Indian society. Recent forceful demands for statehood for Vindhyanal, Vidarbha, Haritdes, Coorg, Kamtapur, Gorkhaland, Madhyadesh, Bundelkhand, and Purvanchal have demonstrated the rising aspirations of sub cultural groupings to have their own autonomous administrative units. In the 1950s and 1960s, in the wake of the movement for constitutional recognition of Hindi as the national language, there was a lurking suspicion in the minds of the political elite in the southern states of India that the elite of the northern region- perceived to be mainly of Aryan racial stock- were intent on subjugating the predominantly Dravidian south through their language policy. The anti-Hindi movement in the south had assumed violent proportions and there were demands for the secession of southern states and establishment of Dravidstan. The Indian state demonstrated remarkable wisdom in accommodating the demands of the southerners and recognised English as an official language along with Hindi.

However, this spirit of accommodation gradually gave way to statist-integrationist zeal and all demands for autonomy were treated with force, leading to complications further down the line. The unwillingness of the state to share its authority with the constituent units was the primary reason for this "siege" attitude. During the 1980s, an increasingly closed and paranoid Indian state adopted

a siege mentality when confronted by demands for autonomy, which bordered on secession. The demands for autonomous statehood within the Indian Union were also unfavourably received by the central administration. The 1980s saw the rise of secessionist movements in Punjab, Kashmir and some of the north eastern states (Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura). The movements for autonomy in several regions-Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Gorkhaland- also gathered momentum and made their presence felt on the political horizon. The response of the ruling Congress Party under Rajiv Gandhi was to negotiate with the leaders of the more assertive movements. There were a series of accords with the Akali Dal leadership in Punjab, with the All Assam Students' Union (which later became Assam Gana Parishad), and with Gorkha leader Subhas Ghising in 1985. In all these cases, the central government led by the Congress Party seemed accommodating and granted some amount of autonomy to the assertive units. In the case of Jharkhand, the Congress tried to absorb the assertive leadership and thus defuse the movement.

However, during the 1990s when the movements for Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh came to the fore, Congress was rather undecided about the question of granting autonomy to these regions. But the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)- the party leading the coalition in power in India- during the days of its ascendancy in the 1990s, exhibited a spirit of accommodation and openly supported the idea of statehood for aspiring groups. This also helped it gain political footholds in areas such as Jharkhand, western Orissa, and Uttaranchal. The reservations of the Congress leadership in December 1998 led the BJP to withdraw the Vananchal/Jharkhand Bill. However, the grant of statehood to Jharkhand, Uttaranchal, and Chhatisgarh in the year 2000 has conveyed an attitude of sympathy towards such assertions from the opposition as well as the parties in power at the centre (ibid.-348-49). Finally, during the BJP rule in 2000, three new states were created i.e., Jharkhand carved out from Bihar, Chhatisgarh from Madhya Pradesh and Uttaranchal from Uttar Pradesh.

REGIONS, REGIONALISM AND TRIGGERS IN INDIAN FEDERALISM

The openness for political leadership to the idea of the formation of smaller states for electoral gains has led many analysts to conclude that such steps will open up a Pandora's Box and demands for autonomous units will proliferate. This could well lead to "remapping" of the Indian federation. In fact, the assertions by people of Kamtapur in West Bengal and the renewed demands of Gorkhas for a separate state have strengthened such suspicions. There have also demands for statehood from other regions (Vidarbha, Harit Desh, Coorg, Vindhyanal, and Purvanchal). Many others are in the

offing: Malwa, Kutch, Saurashtra, Mithilanchal, Kosala (Western Orissa), etc. It may be useful to outline some of these upcoming demands for autonomy/statehood.

Situated in northeast Maharashtra, Vidarbha is an economically backward region but rich in mineral and forest resources. The economic viability of the Vidarbha region as a separate province was recognised by the State Reorganization committee in 1953-1955. However, the demand for a separate state/province for Vidarbha (which predates the Chhatisgarh and Uttaranchal movements) was subsumed in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement (a movement for unification of all Marathi-speaking areas) in the 1960s and it was absorbed in the state of Maharashtra. However, the demand for Vidarbha state continued to be raised intermittently (Behuria, 2002).

The Vidarbha Rajya Sanghrsha Samity ("Struggle for the Separate State of Vidarbha") and Maha-Vidarbha Sanghrsha Samity ("Association for the Struggle for Greater Vidarbha"), the organizations that led this movement, gathered speed in the 1990s when BJP supported the idea of a separate Vidarbha state. A statutory development board for the region came into existence in 1994 in recognition of the need for developmental initiatives in the region. The BJP advocacy had a political motive – it wanted to penetrate into the Vidarbha region, traditionally regarded as a bastion of the Congress Party. The BJP advocacy was however, contested by its ally Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, which is still wedded to the idea of preserving and nurturing "the emotional and linguistic unity of all Maharastrians". In fact, in 1996, when the Vidarbha demand was raised, Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray had vowed to lead the movement for statehood himself if the region's developmental backlog was not cleared within two years. Since the creation of three new states in August 2000, the demand for the Vidarbha state has gathered further momentum. The decision of the Congress Party apart from other parties on the issue will determine the course of the movement in the near future (ibid.).

Since the creation of Chhatisgarh state, a demand for "Vindhya Pradesh" has been raised by the politicians from the region headed by the speaker of the Madhya Pradesh legislative assembly, Srinivas Tiwari. Tiwari reportedly called twenty-five MLAs (members of the legislative assembly) to his residence in March 2000 to discuss the issue of a separate state of Vindhya Pradesh. This would comprise six regions of the Vindhya region: Datia, Tikamgarh, Rewa, Seedhi, Shehdol, and Santa. After the independence of India from the colonial rule, Vindhya Pradesh came into existence in 1948 and a government was installed in the state after the 1952 elections. However, it was merged with Madhya Pradesh in 1956. Thousands of people had protested the move and were jailed. On 10 March 2000, the state assembly unanimously adopted the nongovernment resolution to carve out a Vindhya state. The resolution had been

forwarded to the central government in New Delhi and the centre has yet to make a decision on this (ibid.).

The Kodagu Rajya Mukti Morcha (KRMM), which roughly translated means the Movement for the Liberation of the State of Kodagu, is an organization led by N.U. Nachappa that has campaigned for a separate state of Coorg to be carved out of the present state of Karnataka. The declaration by Deve Gowda, the then prime Minister of India, in 1996 that Uttarakhand would soon be granted statehood, gave a further boost to this movement. The Kodagu or Coorg district is the smallest district in the southwest of the Karnataka state. Until its amalgamation into the Kannad state of Mysore (now Karnataka) on linguistic grounds following the recommendation of the States Reorganization Commission, the Coorg functioned as a Part "C" state from January 1952 to 1 November 1956- slightly less than five years. The KRMM sponsored the "Madikeri Declaration" of 22 November 1996, projected as the Cauvery land charter of rights, followed soon after the "Gowda Declaration", which formed the framework and the inspiration for the KRMM to lead Coorg to the "liberation of Kodagu and its creation as a separate Ethnic State." The KRMM was later known as the Coorg National Council (CNC) with Nachappa as its secretary-general. The CNC also has a web site to promote its cause (ibid.).

Purvanchal Mukti Morcha- roughly translated as Liberation Front for Purvanchal- headed by Raj Kumar Singh, first demanded a separate state of Purvanchal comprising twenty districts of eastern UP in 1996. This is a relatively backward area, and the "green revolution" that brought agricultural prosperity to the western districts of the state could not touch this area. The people in this area speak a local dialect, "Bhojpuri." The leaders of this area have often held the discriminatory policy of the Uttar Pradesh government responsible for the backwardness of the area. This has led them to demand a separate state. The Pragatisheel Bhojpur Samaj ("Progressive Bhojpuri Society") has made frequent demands for an even larger Bhojpur, comprising twenty-five districts of eastern UP and neighbouring Bihar, with Varanasi as its capital, and inclusion of the Bhojpuri language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The SRC of 1953 debated the possibility of creating a separate state of Western Uttar Pradesh (Paschim Pradesh) and 97 out of 100 MLAs from this region then submitted a memorandum to the SRC demanding the separation of the western districts. But it was discouraged by the congress leadership of the time on the excuse that there was no public support behind the issue. This region has benefited most during the green revolution and the planned economy of the Nehru era and is a prosperous area. Recently, Ajit Singh, son of former prime minister Charan Singh and leader of the farmers, has called this region Harit Desh (the "Green Country") and convened a meeting of western UP leaders on 19 August 2000 to forcefully put his demand for a Harit Pradesh. Recently

the BJP leadership expressed its willingness to support the demand purely for electoral advantage. The issue of Harit Desh is being debated now in India with great enthusiasm. The future of this movement will depend on the political mobilization of the people in the region and the interests the leaders of the movement take in the issue (ibid.).

The Bundelkhand region of central India encompasses twelve districts of northern Madhya Pradesh (MP) and five districts of southern Uttar Pradesh. The area once known in history as Bundelkhand is identified with the districts of Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalun, Hamirpur, Banda and Mahoba in Uttar Pradesh, Sagar, Chattarpur, Tikamgarh, Panna, and Damoh in Madhya Pradesh and parts of Gwalior, Datia, Shivpuri, and Chanderi. It is located in central Hindi belt, south of the Yamuna River, between the fertile Gangetic plain stretching across northern UP and highlands of central MP. This region has recently witnessed a movement for the recognition of the separate state of Bundelkhand led by Raja Bundela, a film actor.

The movement for creating a separate state of Kamtapur from the state of West Bengal is being spearheaded by the Coch-Rajbangshis, who mainly inhabit areas in north Bengal and parts of Assam. Besides statehood, they are also demanding the inclusion of Kamtapuri language in the Eighth Schedule and the propagation of the Kamtapuri language and culture through state controlled radio and television. The two organizations taking the lead in this field are the Kamtapur Peoples' Party (KPP) and the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO). The former is more moderate; yet its leader, Atul Roy, reportedly said "We will not abandon our demand for statehood, and if Rajbangshi mothers have to lose their sons for achieving the goal of statehood, so be it".

The KLO is allegedly coordinating its militant activities with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which is demanding formation of an independent Assam. The fledgling KLO militants are reportedly being groomed by seasoned militants from the ULFA in the Dooars region (known for its teas), the Buxa reserve forests, Cooch Behar and North Bengal's bordering areas with Assam and Bangladesh. Recently, KLO activists have launched a number of attacks on Communist Party workers. The situation became so critical that police teams from Assam and West Bengal launched a joint operation code-named "Operation Shadow" in mid-November 2000 to arrest the activists. On 6 November, 2000, Kamtapur activists descended in the thousands on the Nilmoni Airport in Cooch Behar town in support of the demand for a separate state of Kamtapur, and held a hugely successful mass rally. The movement for a Kamtapur state is progressing quickly at present. The Kamtapuris have also resorted to violence to uphold their cause (ibid.).

Gorkhaland was granted autonomous council status in August 1985. However in the wake of the recent formation of three new states, the Gorkhas have renewed demands

for a separate state for the Gorkha people, comprising parts of hill subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong, and Kalimpong. The Gorkha Liberation Front and the Gorkhaland United Front have recently marked the renewal of their agitation for Gorkhaland with a series of strikes.

Several Bodo insurgent groups have been working since the 1960s for goals that range from the establishment of a Bodo autonomous council, to a separate Bodo state within India, to total independence from India. The Bodos were granted an autonomous council in February 1993, but were unsatisfied with the amount of autonomy in this arrangement and demanded a separate state, which soon led to demands for "a sovereign Bodoland". The Bodos have taken to violence to drive their points home. Their violence expulsion of non-Bodos from the region has resulted in the displacement of more than 87,000 ethnic Santhals, and a smaller number Bengalis and Nepalis have been displaced by the violent conflict between Bodo insurgents and non-Bodos in western Assam. Ethnic tension is rife in Assam, which is home to many ethnic groups. Some groups, such as the Assamese and Bodos, have lived in the region for many centuries. Others, including Bengalis, Santhals, and ethnic Nepalese, migrated there during the 1980s. The campaign for Bodoland and its attendant violence continues unabated. However, the government's initiative to bring the Bodos to the discussion table is showing some promise. The recent meeting of some of the Bodo leaders with the Indian home minister showed that the centre is powerless as the Assam legislature would not approve a separate state of Bodoland at present. However, it may not be long before a separate state of Bodoland is carved out of Assam within the purview of the Indian constitution. On 18 January, 2001, Mainao Daimary, publicity secretary of the Bodo Liberation Tigers, expressed satisfaction at the progress of peace talks between the outfits and the Indian government (ibid.).

The unity and integrity of the Indian state, mostly understood in the territorial sense, has clouded the central government's approach toward demands for confederal autonomy. In some cases, the movements for maximum autonomy have confronted the coercive might of the state and have violent in nature. In such cases, the fear of disintegration has often led the state to react to such demands with a reflexive statist attitude- with sweeping, indiscriminate military aggression. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir and some of the north eastern states (such as Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Tripura) external support for autonomist-turned-secessionist demand has further complicated matters, compelling the defense mechanism of the Indian state to resort to intense counterinsurgency operations.

But research shows that in many cases, apart from external intervention, unimaginative handling of demands for "autonomy" within the Indian union has itself led to violence. Often it is this descent into violence that has

invited external forces to fish in troubled waters. The unending cycle of violence has assumed "autonomy" of its own and refuses to subside. The example of Kashmir and many instances from the north east corroborate such a point of view. The autonomy provision for the state of Jammu and Kashmir that is written in the Indian constitution via Article 370 and the articles that seek to determine the relative autonomy of the north eastern states have time and again emerged as irritants for the central administration (ibid.).

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR REGIONALISM IN INDIA

In a country where federalisation has brought about political unity, one finds it difficult to notice emotional integration, and it is not strange that divisive forces of linguism and regionalism should have emerged.

Of late, India has been witnessing struggles around the assertiveness and conflicting claims of identity groups, and of struggles amongst them. These struggles are often along regional lines primarily due to uneven development and unequal access to political power. Let us refer to three factors responsible for bringing local/ regional demands into sharp focus. *First*, the changed mode of electoral representation has led to hitherto politically dormant regions. The political articulation and mobilisation along caste/ethnic/language-based social cleavages undertaken by these newly emergent state/ region level parties remain territorially contained and rarely cross the regional lines. Also, the national parties with distinct regional characters increasingly adhere to region-specific electoral campaigns and policies. *Second*, growing regional inequalities in terms of income and consumption in the post-reforms period have accentuated the perception of neglect and discrimination. Coastal regions/developed regions have invariably benefited more from the flow of private investment as compared to the regions at peripheral locations, those with disturbed law and order situations, and those with poor economic and social infrastructure. *Third*, we have what may be called ironically the "secession of the rich", even rich regions within constituent states, attracting huge private investments and registering impressive growth, have started resenting the continued dependence of relatively underdeveloped regions on the revenues transferred to them (i.e. Harit Pradesh). The local elites complain of "reverse" discrimination as often the elites from the other politically dominant regions manage to corner financial grants/deals/lucrative portfolios. As a consequence of the above processes, India's federal ideology has registered a marked shift reflected in the following three developments. *First*, regional identity, culture, and geographical differences now appear to be better recognised as a valid basis for administrative division and political representation. Separate statehood movements are no longer

being stigmatised as parochial, chauvinist and even anti-national as was done in the past. *Second*, the shift is visible in the way the new states are now being proposed on the grounds of good governance had development rather than on the language principle that had, ostensibly, guided state formation during the first phase of the reorganisation of states. *Third*, the dialect communities of late have been asking for their own “territorial homeland” while underlining the cultural and literary distinctiveness and richness of the dialectic, i.e., Bundelkhand, Ruhelkhand, and Mithilanchal (Kumar, 2010:15).

Regionalism is a dynamic, pragmatic concept. It seldom sustains itself on one single factor: a coalition of factors and circumstances, including politicisation of the region and sense of economic retardation is the basis of regional revival and assertions. But the specific factors fostering regionalism are apt to vary from place to place, and even in the context of the same place, the precise mix of them and their individual potency do not remain unaltered over a period of time. The peculiar historical processes have a bearing on regionalism. What could be the criteria, then, for recognising a region? (Maheshwari, 2000:221).

Rasheeduddin Khan who has examined this problem quite deeply observes: To promote discussion and further classification it is suggested that the criteria for determining a socio-cultural sub-region in India can be formulated as follows: Maximum homogeneity within and maximum identity without; where homogeneities are to be established on ten counts: 1) language dialect; 2) social composition (communities/jatis); 3) ethnic regions; 4) demo-geographic features; 5) area (geographic contiguity); 6)cultural pattern; 7) economy and economic life; 8) historical antecedents; 9) political background; 10) psychological make –up and felt consciousness of group identity (Khan, cited in Maheshwari, 2000:222).

Ashok Behuria points out that the consequent calculus of electoral politics has led to the growth of immensely stratified entrepreneurial elite, especially in multicultural/pluralist societies like India, who have sought to build their constituencies on ever proliferating ethnocultural identities. This has fractured the existing civil society and ruptured the uniting links and necessitated the introduction of fresh and refined bonds of unity. The state with its inertial status-quo-ism has failed to take the lead by redefining its relations of power with the constituent units. This has led to systemic violence. The Indian federation has temperamentally behaved as a “union” and not a “federation”. However, the leadership in the country has to take care to adopt federal principles to judge such cases of autonomy and gradually develop powers (especially financial powers) to the units if it is to contain such ethnocultural assertions (Behuria, 2002).

Indian federalism has provided the institutional terrains within which various “ethnic nations” in India (e.g., Tamil, Telegu, Bengali, Sikh, Gujarati, Manipuri, or Assamese) have taken shape, defined themselves, and are able to

celebrate their identity. The underlying principle in various accommodations of identity in India has remained internal self-determination. Internal self-determination has remained the predominant form in which regionalism, and even sub-regionalism, has sought to express itself. The regional and sub-regional accommodation of identity in India has served to weaken the bases of political secessionism and separatism while not defeating the principle of (internal) self-determination (of nations) [Kumar, 2010:18].

Besides the above factors, there are also many other factors responsible for the growth of regionalism like: i) Regionalism made its appearance as a reaction against the efforts of the national government to impose a particular ideology, language, or cultural pattern on all people or groups. Thus the States of south have resisted imposition of Hindi as official language because they feared this would lead to dominance of the North. Similarly, in Assam anti-foreigner movement was launched by the Assamese to preserve their own culture; ii) continuous neglect of an area or region by the ruling parties and concentration of administrative and political power has given rise to demand for decentralization of authority and bifurcate of unilingual states. On occasions “sons of soil theory” has been put forth to promote the interests of neglected groups or areas of the state; iii) the desire of the various units of the Indian federal system to maintain their sub-cultural regions and greater degree of self-government has promoted regionalism and given rise to demand for greater autonomy; iv) the desire of regional elites to capture power has also led to rise of regionalism. It is well known that political parties like DMK, AIADMK, Akali Dal, Telugu Desam, Asom Gana Parishad etc. have encouraged regionalism to capture power; v) the interactions between the forces of modernization and mass participation have also largely contributed to the growth of regionalism in India. As the country is still away from realising the goal of a nation state, the various groups have failed to identify their group interests with national interests; hence the feeling of regionalism has persisted; and vi) the growing awareness among the people of backward areas that they are being discriminated against has also promoted feeling of regionalism. The local political leaders have fully exploited this factor and tried to feed the people the idea that the central government was deliberately trying to maintain regional imbalances by neglecting social and economic development of certain areas.

Conclusion

However, regionalism is at present, a fairly widespread phenomenon in the Indian political system. Moreover, it is unlikely to lose its sway over people’s minds, at least in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, as the various developmental programmes are carried out, regional

disparities are already becoming more marked and wide-spread engendering a sense of cumulative deprivations in the people of certain regions. This coupled with increasing politicisation in the community is sure to impart sharper focus to regionalism which would emerge more prominently as a factor of small significance in Indian polity.

Among all these explanations there is a common thread of argument that says that the shrinking capacity of the state, underdevelopment, and the politicisation of plural peripheral identities, together with the search for power by neo-elites at the margins, have snapped the inter-ethnic and intercultural bonds that have so far drawn them together. This has created new identities and led to an overwhelming craze for autonomy or self-legislation. It is interesting to note that the concessions of statehood in the recent cases were conditioned by sheer electoral calculations and not by considerations of economic viability. And these concessions in no way altered the basic constitutionally guaranteed relationship between the federation and the units, which is lopsided in favour of the federation. Creation of "dependent" states will in no way improve the conditions, and the passion for a greater degree of autonomy will haunt the Indian states until a genuinely developed refederalized system of governance grows out of the present system of Unitarian federal democracy in India.

Throughout India regionalism has greatly persisted. In Maharashtra, Shiv Sena against Kannadigas in the name of Marathi pride and recently MNS (Maharashtra Nav Nirman Sena) activists against Biharis; in Punjab against non-Punjabis that gave rise to Khalistan movement and earlier Akali movement; In Andhra Pradesh, Telengana movement with an aim of separate state; in Assam, ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) against migrant Biharis and Bengalis; in Northeast region against other Indians. So, regionalism has turned slowly from non-violent movement to violent movements. When violence is used against people in the name of regionalism it is, no doubt, a criminal act and is punishable. Article 19 of the Indian Constitution provides a citizen of India, to move and settle in any part and to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. When ULFA or MNS activists used violence against poor migrant workers, they clearly violated the law of the land. Every Indian is son of this soil. A Bihari becomes a Mumbaikar when a bomb explodes in Mumbai and a Mumbaikar becomes Bihari, when Kosi wrecks havoc in plains of Bihar.

Keeping in view the electoral calculations for the Lok Sabha polls, recently the United Progressive Alliance (UPA-II) coordination committee and Congress Working Committee's approval to partitioning Andhra Pradesh and granting Telengana to be the 29th state of the Union has triggered violent movements across the regions in the subcontinent. A number of leaders associated with the demand for separate statehood- of Gorkhaland,

Bodoland and Vidarbha in particular- have already started their agitations. The closure of public offices, schools and educational institutions and disruption of daily life in West Bengal and Assam are indicative of the desire and desperation of the people for separate states for their regions (Sarangi 2013:19). Gorkha Janmulti Morcha (GJM) chief Bimal Gurung has resigned as the chief executive of the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA), which was set up in 2011, to press his party's demand for Union Territory status for the Gorkhaland area of the Darjeeling hills. The GTA, as a regional autonomous council, had started functioning from August 2012 following a tripartite agreement between the Government of India, the West Bengal Government and the GJM.

Similarly, through their call for a state bandh, rail blockade and the disruption and destruction of life and property, the leaders of Bodoland and the All Bodo Students Union in Assam have already intensified their struggle for Bodoland. The Bodo Territorial Council (BTC), which was founded in 2003 after the Bodo leaders ended their armed struggle, is now considered incapable of addressing the demand of the Bodos, the Karbis the Dimasas and the Koch-Rajbangshis. The demand for statehood for Vidarbha too has re-emerged, with Vilas Muttemwar, the Congress leader from Nagpur, urging his party leadership to create a Vidarbha state.

Other statehood demands come from Awadh Pradesh and Bhojpur (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar), Bodoland (Assam), Bundelkhand (Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), Coorg (Karnataka), Gorkhaland (West Bengal), Harit Pradesh (Western Uttar Pradesh), Konkan Pradesh (Konkan region), Marathwada (Maharashtra), Mahakoshal (Odisha), Mithilachal (Bihar), Muru Pradesh (Rajasthan), Poorvanchal (Uttar Pradesh), Saurashtra (Gujarat), Vidarbha (Maharashtra), and so on. These regions having with different regional identity on the line of region, language, culture, caste and class now pose a grave challenge to the Indian federalism. The time barely needs a second States Reorganization Commission to address these issues.

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NOTES:

1. Regime, regionalism and regional integration plays a very important role in international relations today specially to determine how states across the world integrate themselves to form regional organizations in different regimes. When we talk of regional integration, we mean

“a set of policies by one or more states designed to promote the emergence of a cohesive regional unit, which dominates the pattern of relations between the states of that region and the rest of the world, and which forms the organizing basis for policy within the region across a range of issues” (Hurrell A 1992). If we focus on formal institutions and organizations, one possible way to look at regional integration is that these schemes create international regimes, i.e., rules, regulations and decision-making procedures (Krasner 1983). The scope of these regimes can then vary, including in some cases security issues- like the early years of ASEAN- and in some cases mostly economic issues in the early 1990s, when the creation of an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was agreed. The EU, which started as economic integration, began dealing with security and defence issues from about the same time, after the end of the Cold War. There is also great variance in the capacity of the institutions created by regional integration schemes. Most regional cooperation stays rather traditional, i.e., inter-state cooperation among sovereign states. But at least the EU has gone beyond this and created supranational institutions. The member states have pooled and delegated sovereignty to common institutions. The EU has a political system that can make authoritative decisions for the entire group of participating states (cited in Laursen 2010:3/4). Although much integration theory has been developed to explain specifically the European case, integration theory has also been used to study integration in other parts of the world, including the Americas, East Asia, and the Pacific. For more information on regime, regionalism and regional integration, see, for example, Robert Keohane (1982), Walter Mattli (1999), Joseph S, Nye (1965), F. Laursen (2003, 2010).

2. Paul R. Brass (1982), “Pluralism, Regionalism and Decentralizing tendencies in Contemporary Politics” in Wilson and D. Dalton (eds.), *The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration*, London, C. Hurst; Reports of the States Reorganisation Commission, New Delhi, Government of India, p.260.

3. Rasheeduddin Khan, (1992), *Federal India- A Design for Change*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, p.44.

4. See, for example, Tanja AB (2011). *Comparative Regionalism: A New Research Agenda*.

5. The three waves of regionalism have been taken from Louise Fawcett (2004). *Exploring Regional Domains: A Comparative History of Regionalism*. *International Affairs* 80(3).

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