

INDIA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROCESS IN SOUTH ASIA: A STUDY INTO THE STATUS OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA

Manzoor Ahmad,

Department of Politics & International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Email: manzoor.ahmad@iiu.edu.pk

Phone Office: 051 – 9019469, Cell: 0314 / 333 - 5524289

ABSTRACT: *Regional integration theorists believe that a core state plays a crucial role in the growth of regionalism. The policies and priorities of states are shaped by its internal politics. Thus, India's domestic politics is worth-exploring in the context of South Asian regionalism. South Asia once formed a single administrative, economic and political unit was divided on communal lines due to the concerns of its Muslim community. The status and position of Indian Muslims constituting the largest religious minority in India and the one-third of overall Muslim population in South Asia can have far reaching impact on the process of regional integration in South Asia. Their integration into Indian state and society can serve as a centripetal force for European modeled regional integration in South Asia. In this context, the paper explores the status of Muslim minority in India and its impact on the process of regional integration in South Asia.*

KEY WORDS: partition, India, Muslims, regionalism, South Asia, integration.

1. INTRODUCTION

There exist several theories that provide important insights and help explain the process of regional integration from various perspectives. Some of them are quite helpful in understanding South Asian regionalism which is heavily Indo-centric and unique in the world. These theories include: neo-functionalism, transactionalism, intergovernmentalism, and liberal-intergovernmentalism. The Transactionalists such as Deutsch observed that regional integration generally evolved “around a core of strength,” i.e. a core state. Haas, founder of neofunctionalism, claimed that a “core area” or core state can play either positive or negative role, i.e. through serving either as an integrative or disintegrative force, in a region. Intergovernmentalists such as Stanley Hoffmann and Haggard claimed that the role and preferences of governments of leading states was crucial in determining the fate of cooperative arrangements. The liberal Intergovernmentalists such as, Moravcsik, Putnam, Garrett and Lange and Huelshoff argued that domestic politics of member states shaped the preferences and policies of their respective governments [1].

India is the core of strength by all means in South Asia and the most important member in SAARC. It is the largest country in South Asia by all means – about three times larger than the rest combined. India possessed about three-fourths of region's geographic area and population, and four-fifths of regional production and exports. It is also far superior to other members in military and political terms. In the context of South Asian regionalism, the importance of India's role for the success of SAARC has largely been acknowledged. It has been argued that India's role and behavior would largely determine the fate of South Asian regionalism [2]. However, India's role and behavior, in turn, is shaped by its domestic societal forces and trends and political actors and processes. It makes a marked linkage between India's domestic politics and regional integration process in South Asia.

There is another strong aspect of a clear linkage between India's domestic politics and South Asian regionalism. It is rooted in the geo-political history of the region. The most of the South Asia once formed a single administrative, economic and political unit under iron rule of British India.

However, it had to be divided on communal lines at the end of colonial rule in 1947. It was partitioned into two states, i.e., India and Pakistan. The disintegration of latter resulted into emergence of Bangladesh in 1971. The partition was carried out on the demand of All India Muslim League (AIML). The demand was based on the fears among the Muslims with regard to their: religio-cultural identity; political interests and; economic rights; in the united India, most possibly dominated and ruled by majoritarian Hindu community. The partition and subsequent disintegration of Pakistan resulted into division of Muslim population into three different states, India (176 million), Pakistan (167 million) and Bangladesh (133 million) [3]. Thus, in the views of some critics, such as Kuldip Nayar, Muslims are the main losers of this state of affairs which need to be mended through regional integration of South Asia [4]. However, the prospects of regional integration largely depend on India's domestic politics. The question arises: does India's domestic politics create a demand for regional integration through attracting other nations, particularly Muslims, living in neighbouring countries towards it and serve as a centripetal force in the region, or otherwise? One of the possible means to address this question is the study of India's treatment of its Muslims community which constitutes India's largest minority with over 14 percent of its population as well as about one-third of the second largest (Muslim) community in South Asia.

In this perspective, it is imperative to investigate as to how far India's domestic politics serve as a centripetal or centrifugal force in South Asia. The present study explores whether and to what extent the Indian ruling elites have changed the conditions that had led South Asian Muslims to demand partition of India. Have they dispelled the apprehensions of Muslim community or otherwise? How far the Indian Muslims have been politically and socio-economically integrated into Indian state and society? The study has been divided into four sections. The first section introduces the problem and contains conceptual framework of the study; the second section includes a brief overview of the Indian Muslims and the factors that had led to partition of India. The third section gives a detailed assessment of India's

domestic politics and the status and position of Muslims in Indian society. The fourth section will conclude the paper.

1.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study assumes that the status of India Muslims have an important impact on the possible demand and process of regional integration in South Asia. There are two possible scenarios with two different outcomes. The integration of Muslims into Indian state and society can have a positive impact on the process as it would help dispel the fears of Muslims in neighbouring countries. The latter could thus feel that the apprehensions of the leaders of AIML were unfounded or unreal and they would think positively for unification of South Asian states, as some India leaders and scholars aspire. As such, India's domestic politics can serve as a centripetal force and attract people of neighbouring states towards it and create a demand for regional integration on European model in South Asia. The failure of India's state and society to integrate its Muslim population can have negative impact on the process. It would not only pace up disintegrative tendencies in India itself but also reinforce the fears of Muslims living in neighbouring countries. The latter could thus feel that the concerns of the leaders of AIML were real and they would think negatively for unification of South Asian states. As such, India's domestic politics can serve as a centrifugal force and push people of neighbouring states away from it and leave no chance of creation of a demand for regional integration in South Asia.

2. FACTORS AND FORCES RESPONSIBLE FOR PARTITION

The Muslims had enjoyed privileged positions in the society during the Muslim rule in Indian subcontinent. When they were unseated from power, they lost their political and economic status and were gradually pushed downward. The Hindus filled the resultant gap as they had readily acquired western education, and thus, soon became dominant socially and economically. The latter also established relations with the British and increased their political influence in collaboration with foreign rulers. Compounded with their numerical majority, their active participation in politics under the umbrella of All India National Congress (AINC), founded by a British in 1885, the Hindus also became politically dominant. These new socio-economic and political developments created a sense of insecurity among the Muslim minority. It forced them to put forth certain demands aimed at protecting their political and economic rights. The politics of All India Muslim League (AIML) revolved around the same objective till late 1930s. However, the leadership of AINC did not heed to these demands or pay any serious attention to their concerns. The experience of Muslims under brief two years rule of Congress ministries (1937–39) was bitter one and had far reaching effects on South Asian politics. It had forced AIML to demand partition of India on the basis of Two Nation Theory which the leadership of AINC bitterly opposed. The latter had also refused to accept the demands of AIML with regard to certain workable legal and constitutional arrangement that could help safeguard genuine interests of Muslim community. AIML wanted to preserve their religio-cultural identity and protect their political and economic rights. Being hopeful of achieving these ends under three-tiered politico-legal arrangement

proposed in the Cabinet Mission Plan, AIML had accepted it. However, the leadership of AINC rejected the plan which culminated into partition of India in 1947. In sum, the fears of Muslims with regard to their religio-cultural identity and political and economic interests, on one hand; and the failure of the leadership of AINC to accommodate their concerns, on the other hand; were the main causes of partition of South Asia in 1947.

3. INTEGRATION OF MUSLIMS INTO INDIAN STATE AND SOCIETY

Indian founding fathers were fearful that "politicization of religious issues and political organization on religious lines" could threaten the process of nation-building. Thus, Nehru had championed the secularism and separation of politics and religion. In the post-independence era, Indian Muslims were not allowed to organize themselves on religious basis. Indian authorities repeatedly looked upon Muslims with suspicions and perceived them as acting as a "fifth column" of Pakistan [5]. The Indian ruling elites generally alienated and subjugated them to various kinds of oppression.

3.1 RISE OF HINDU EXTREMIST PARTIES AND ITS IMPACT ON MUSLIMS IN INDIA

India was founded as a secular state but it saw the rise of religious extremism in the post-independence era particularly since the early 1980s. It reached to its climax in 1990s to the extent of threatening the very survival of Indian Muslims, as it was shown in riots in Mumbai and Gujarat in 1992 and 2002, respectively [6]. The origin of ethno-religious Hindu nationalism goes back to 1867 when communal divide of India got its illustration in Hindi-Urdu controversy [7]. It got impetus in 1920s with rise of movement of "Hindu Sangatan" which produced various organisations such as Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), latter being "the most important and in some ways the most militant." RSS was a paramilitary organization from its birth, as it was created "to eradicate the weakness of Hindus" through providing them "training in armed and unarmed combat." It was also the originator of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) and later the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Besides, it also created Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to serve as its "religiously-cultural front" and Bajrang Dal. The latter worked like the "modern-day equivalent of storm-troopers." Its activists frequently used violent means to coerce their opponents. "Bajrang goons and ruffians" repeatedly destroyed businesses and properties of people and blazed mosques and churches. All these groups, along-with other fronts, collectively from Sangh Parivar and are related to RSS in a "hub-and-spokes variety," the RSS serving as the hub of the Parivar. They collectively are the champion of Hindutva [8].

The hatred towards Islam and Muslims is a common feature of all sorts of Hindutva. Bidwai observed that a "paranoid, pathological kind of Islamophobia has been integral to all currents of Hindutva. They set their priority: the Muslims were their greatest enemy, the dire 'threat from within'." The Hindu extremist parties believed that Muslims were the "most stigmatised and vilified of the conquerors, and allegedly the most brutal." They look upon the Muslims as legacy of the foreign invaders and Islam as a religion on whose name the Arabs, Persians and Turks made their way to India, plundered

its great civilization and resources, and demolished shrines and other religious places of Hinduism and built mosques and Islamic shrines [9]. The ideologues of Hindutva during pre-independence era included Savarkar and Golwalker. The former had founded the “Two Nation Theory” and had argued that Muslims and Hindus “could not co-exist within the same nation.” Golwalker was inspired by Fascism and Nazism and he had appreciated “Hitler’s view of racial purity.” He had also praised ethnic cleansing of Jews. He believed that it was “a good lesson” for Hindus in India to “learn and profit by” [10]. The founder of RSS, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, had supported AINC in pre-independence era, particularly when the latter declared full independence as its ultimate goal. Hedgewar wanted to impose Hindu culture on India as he believed that: “The Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindustan. It is therefore clear that if Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish Hindu culture” [11].

With this background, BJP was formed in April 1980 by the leaders of the former BJS led by Vajpayee. Meanwhile, VHP condemned the secular parties on their alleged “Muslim appeasement” and launched a campaign for construction of grand Ram Temple at the place of Babri mosque in Ayudhya. BJP then led by Advani found that this issue was gaining popularity and could lead them to power. Consequently, they decided to exploit it [12].

AINC or at least some of its leaders were also Hindu communalists in the disguise of Indian nationalists. It was the strong conviction of the leadership of AIML due to which it had to demand for a separate homeland. Interestingly, this fact was also acknowledged by Nehru himself. He wrote in his autobiography: “Many a Congressman was a communalist under a nationalist cloak” [13]. Besides others, Sardar Patel, Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India, was also a communalist who wanted a dominant role of Hinduism in state policy [14]. The phenomenon continued in the post-independence era and became more pervasive in 1980s parallel with the rise of Hindu communalist parties. By then, the Congress party was reportedly trying to court the Hindu voters and Indira Gandhi had converted to “soft-Hindutva.” She had even started to visit Hindu temples by 1982. Earlier, Indira Gandhi had effectively used Hindu card during general elections in 1980 after losing the confidence of minorities, such as Muslims and Sikhs, and lower class Hindus. She decided to exploit Hindu sentiments through taking tough position towards Pakistan and Indian Muslims in order to achieve her political ends, which she successfully did but pushed the country towards further communal divide. She also attempted to bring uniformity in Indian culture and politics which provoked minorities such as Muslims and Sikhs who struggled hard to preserve their separate identity. They had to pay heavy price as they were forced to face terrorism by the state authorities as well as violence by Hindu chauvinists [15]. Indira Gandhi also used brute force against Sikhs and stormed the Golden Temple – a sacred religious place of Sikhs. Her murder in the hands of her Sikh bodyguards had resulted into massive killings of Sikhs by Indian Hindus and government agencies. These events had “further polarised Indian politics along religious lines.” The Congress, now under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, had taken benefit of it and “cynically drove this advantage home by mounting a

paranoid and hysterical Lok Sabha election campaign in 1984 about ‘the nation being in danger’.” Its victory was only made possible by the Hindu vote “consciously and deliberately solicited by the Congress party as a Hindu party.” It was this Hindu vote which had, at least for the time being, “decimated the ‘revisionist’ BJP and reincarnated Cong (I) as BJP” [16].

BJP’s anti-Muslim stance was evident from the onset. By 1987, it had chosen “the three ‘trident’ issues, greatly and long agitated by the Jana Sangh, as its principal focus and concerns.” These issues which topped BJP’s agenda included: to put a ban on cow slaughter; to abrogate Article 370 of Indian Constitution, and; to impose a uniform civil code. This agenda was clearly based on anti-Muslim sentiments among Hindu population which extremist parties wanted to exploit for their political gains. In this background, the BJP leader Advani launched a bloody “Somnath-to-Ayudhya rath yatra” in 1990 and incited fierce anti-Muslim riots in Indian cities and towns. “The most chanted slogan” during the rath yatra was: “There are only two places for Muslims Pakistan or kabristan (graveyard)” [17].

3.2 ATTACKS ON THE LIVES, PROPERTY AND HONOUR OF INDIAN MUSLIMS

The recurring anti-Muslim riots in India constitute the symbols and causes of wide gulf between the two largest religious communities of South Asia. Though all religious minorities have been insecure in the hands of Hindu extremists in India but the Muslims remained their worst victims. Reportedly, the communal violence erupted five times every week and around eighty percent of their victims were Muslims in India. According to a study, about eight thousand people were killed and tens of thousands others were injured in about thousands of incidents of communal riots from 1961 to 1990. According to official statistics, over five thousand people were killed during communal riots in 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, and 2002. However, actual numbers of deaths during these riots were far higher [18]. Communal violence after the destruction of Babri mosque and then the Gujrat killings were probably the worst of its kind. These incidents badly exposed the weakness of Indian judicial system to provide justice to the minorities, particularly Muslims who were the victims of Hindu nationalists [19]. On several occasions, Indian security forces had also persecuted Indian Muslims. For instance, more than 3000 Muslims were killed in a single day in Nellie, Assam in 1983 claiming that they were infiltrators from Bangladesh. It had exposed the true picture of the Indian state [20].

The extremist Hindu elements recurrently attacked the property, businesses and honour of Indian Muslims. These incidents cause huge loss of property and business to Indian Muslims. Hindu activists at times intentionally targeted them due to business jealousies or other reasons. On several occasions, the communal riots caused displacement of tens of thousands of Muslims with their homes burnt and settlement destroyed by the hands of Hindu extremists. Hindu activists even did not spare the honour of Muslims and molested thousands of Muslim women in different parts of India including Jammu and Kashmir [21].

3.3 ATTACKS ON RELIGIOUS PLACES OF MUSLIMS AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

The extremist Hindu elements frequently attack mosques and religious shrines of Muslims during communal riots in India. They targeted dozens of mosques and shrines in several parts of India. In some cases, they attack such places perceiving it as a revered duty on the plea that the Muslim rulers had constructed them on their religiously sacred places. The extremist Hindu elements have a long list of such alleged constructions which they want to demolish even at the cost of enlarging the already wide gulf between the two largest religious communities of India as well as South Asia as a whole. They already have burnt or demolished some of these constructions. The demolition of historic Babri Masjid (mosque) at Ayudhya, Uttar Pradesh in 1992 was the climax of such extremist postures of Hindu majority towards the Muslim minority in India.

The two main political parties of India – Congress (I) and BJP – were equally responsible for the demolition of historic Babri Masjid. The BJP had launched the political campaign for construction of Ram Temple at the place of Babri mosque and its leaders had personally participated in the destruction of the famous mosque. But the role of Congress Party in destruction of Babri mosque cannot be ignored in any case. In fact, the “mosque-temple controversy” had its origin in the nineteenth century, but it was during the Congress government in 1949, when with the official involvement “the images of Lord Rama” were secretly smuggled “right into the heart of the monument.” Later on, it was Rajiv Gandhi who in his bid to appease the Hindu voters had allowed to open the locks of the famous mosque and to let Hindus to enter into and worship there. As Bidwai observed that the “chain of events leading to the razing of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992, and the developments of the day itself, could not have occurred without the collusion of the national and state (Uttar Pradesh) governments.” It is worth mentioned that the Congress party, led by Narasimaha Rao, had taken the office following the 1991 elections. It had formed a minority-government for about half of its term and had made “an informal or unstated half-alliance with the BJP which had by now emerged as the principal opposition party.” The Congress government did not hold down the extremist Hindu parties to “their specific legal commitments not to disturb the status quo in Ayudhya.” Rather, the government permitted them to raise the momentum of “their hysterical mobilisation and close in on their target” [22]. The destruction of the historical mosque burst into widespread communal riots in India and sent a very negative message to the Muslims living across the borders – both in Bangladesh and Pakistan – to the extent of generating strong reaction against India and the Hindus living in these countries.

Indian political parties, particularly BJP deliberately promoted and used anti-Muslim sentiments to get political mileage and public support in elections and gained power too. Hindu nationalist parties had been successful to skillfully appeal and exploit the “sense of inferiority that many upper-caste Hindu strata felt.” This sense of inferiority has been “rooted in a certain reading of Indian history largely through

colonial eyes, as a succession of period of epochs based on the religion of the rulers.” They believed that Golden Hindu rule of ancient past was followed by dark ages of history in which well armed foreign invaders had conquered unorganized and unarmed Hindus and plundered their resources. The foreign rulers looted prosperous India and ruined its civilization and associated achievements in all fields of arts and sciences. The Hindu extremist parties look upon the Muslims as legacy of the foreign invaders and Islam as a religion on whose name the foreign rulers had made their way to India, and plundered its great civilization and resources [23]. Thus, their animosity towards Muslims was based on their understanding and interpretation of particular historical events. Probably, this was the reason that’s why Indira Gandhi had claimed after defeat and disintegration of Pakistan in 1971 that she had “avenged a thousand years history” [24].

3.4 FORCED CONVERSION OF MUSLIMS TO HINDUISM

Hindu extremist parties ran anti-Muslim campaigns at times to the extent of threatening their lives or expulsion from India. Another option available to them was the re-conversion to Hinduism. They had launched re-conversion movement of Muslims in the pre-independent India and continued it in the post-British era. For instance, the extremist parties, such as VHP, had strived for re-conversion of Muslims in early 1980s. VHP had started a campaign to bring back Dalits at Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu into “the Hindu fold.” Earlier, they had found themselves “oppressed, harassed and humiliated by upper caste Hindus” and thus had decided to embrace Islam in 1980 [25]. The process of conversion of Muslims to Hinduism continues even nowadays. For instance, Hindu extremist organizations, such as BJ and Dharm Jagran Manch (DJM), both associated with RSS and the ruling BJP, have converted hundreds of Muslims to Hinduism in December 2014 [26]. The extremist Hindu elements had also planned to organize a big conversion party on the eve of Christmas, i.e. December 25, 2014, in which thousands of Christians and Muslims were to be converted into Hinduism. However, the programme was cancelled after intervention by Prime Minister Modi [27]. Meanwhile, another extremist group, Dharam Jagran Samiti (DJS), has recently announced that Christians and Muslims “will have to convert to Hinduism if they want to stay in this country.” DJS also affirmed that it would ensure to “free India of Muslims and Christians” and make the country a Hindu state by 2021 [28].

3.5 MUSLIMS AS VICTIMS AS WELL AS ACCUSED OF TERRORISM

In recent years, Indian authorities have increasingly bracketed Muslims with terrorists. Indian government outlawed some of their organizations, including Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), and arrested hundreds of Muslims on the same pretext. The government officials held Muslims responsible for most of the incidents of terrorism in India. It has been commonplace that Indian officials and leaders immediately blamed local Muslims as perpetrators of acts of terrorism, at their own or as aides of neighbouring states, i.e. Pakistan or Bangladesh. The government officials and media generally

accuse or suspect Indian Muslims of collaborating with Pakistan-based militant organizations or its premier agencies such as Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). In some cases, various Indian courts have convicted a few Muslims and sentenced them long imprisonment or death penalty on the charges of terrorism. Ironically, the blame of some terrorist activities in India was put on them even when these incidents were directed against the Muslims themselves or had targeted their religious places and businesses etc. In several cases of terrorism, the Indian officials had initially held Muslims responsible for perpetuating them. However, the later investigations revealed that these acts were carried out by extremist Hindu organizations in connivance with some Indian government officials and military officers. The examples of such incidents include bombing or attacks in; Malegaon in Maharashtra; Makkah Masjid, Hyderabad; Dargah Ajmer Sharif, Rajasthan; and cinema halls in Ludhiana, Indian Punjab. The worst of its example was the Samjhauta Express tragedy in which hundreds of passengers from Pakistan were killed in the hands of extremist Hindu elements [29].

Indian media, particularly the Bollywood movies, have generally failed to portray positive image of Indian Muslims and to help their integration in Indian state and society. Rather, its role has been negative in several respects. Various movies released during the last two decades had portrayed Muslims as perpetrators of terrorism and responsible for erupting communal violence including Mumbai riots of 1993. The movie "Bombay" released in 1995 was one of its few examples. The content of the some movies seriously questioned the loyalty of India Muslims and even dubbed them as ISI agents. The movie "Sarfaroosh" released in 1999 was just an example of such anti-Muslim campaign [30].

The sports, such as cricket, which serves as a unifying force in Pakistan has mostly been "divisive" in India particularly during matches between India and Pakistan. Hindu leaders and extremist parties generally accused Muslims of supporting Pakistan most of the time which in certain places caused communal riots and killings of Muslims. Due to the same reasons, the police force in Kolkata had once decided to take measures in order to prevent Muslims from supporting Pakistan during a cricket match. The police believed that their support to Pakistan was against the "national interest." However, India had won the match and the Muslims wanted to join the celebration of this victory. Ironically, the extremist Hindu elements had "actively prevented [them] from doing so" in certain areas.

There has been "a dichotomy in Indian national consciousness about the role of Muslims in the country." On several occasions, some segments of Indian Muslims supported Pakistan in its matches against India but this support was disapproved by majority community groups and the police. When Muslims tried to celebrate Indian victory over Pakistan, they were prevented actively, and sometimes even violently. Crick noted that in several other countries too, ethnic minorities supported teams other than their national ones in order to express their separate identity and it did not cause any problem for them. However, whenever Indian Muslims did so, it was disapproved by majority community. Some Indian leaders had gone to the extent of extremism in

this respect. For instance, Advani and Thackeray had divided Muslims into good and bad ones on the basis of their support for Indian team or otherwise. They demanded that Indian Muslims should prove that they were not Pakistani supporters by supporting India instead of Pakistan. Thackeray had once said: "I want them with tears in their eyes every time India loses to Pakistan" [31].

3.6 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF INDIAN MUSLIMS

A vast majority of Muslims have been relegated to the level of second-rate citizens in India. They are politically marginalized, economically deprived and socially degraded without their due share in jobs and other important positions [32]. Indian Muslims have been the "most backward community of the country" on the basis of almost all major index of human development. They were underrepresented politically, and did not have their due share in government or private sector jobs. Their representation in government jobs of officer categories has been nominal, and they did not have appropriate access to education and health facilities. In certain cases, they have been intentionally kept backward. Reportedly, about 80 percent of Indian Muslims were poor and their per capita income was far less than India's average per capita income. In some cases, position of Indian Muslims was even worst in the country. The other communities such as Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (untouchables) lived under better conditions than Muslims. These classes had reserved quota in Indian economic and political institutions but Muslims have even not been seriously considered for that "privilege." Even the post-liberalization reforms and economic development did not bring any significant change in the lives of Indian Muslims [33].

Muslims generally did the utmost to prove that they were Indians by all respects, but they were not fully integrated into Indian society. Their physical and political alienation and socio-economic exploitation in the hands of Hindu majority has been widely recognized. The Hindu nationalists had also strived to impose on Indian Muslims an "invisible and psychological partition, which is anytime worse than physical and visible partition" [34].

4. CONCLUSION

India being the largest and core state of South Asia could contribute both positively or negatively in South Asian regionalism. It could generate a demand for regional integration on European model through serving as a centripetal force in the region but it largely depended on its domestic politics particularly the status and position of Indian Muslims in its society. The integration of Muslims into Indian state and society could have a positive impact on the process as it would help dispel the fears of Muslims in neighbouring countries, as these apprehensions were the main factors that had caused partition of India. The failure of India's state and society to integrate its Muslim population would have negative impact on the process as it would reinforce the fears of Muslims living in neighbouring countries.

India's ruling elites have badly failed to integrate Muslims into its state and society. They have generally subjected Muslims to political alienation, economic deprivation,

religious discrimination and social marginalization in the post independence era. The rise of communal politics since early 1980s, and ever growing strength of extremist Hindu parties have further pushed Indian Muslims to the receiving end. The activists of extremist Hindu parties have repeatedly targeted lives, property, honour and religious places of Muslims and occasionally intimidated them to forced conversion. At times, the Indian authorities and media had portrayed Muslims as perpetrators of terrorism when they were actually its victims. Indian ruling elites, political parties and media have badly failed to define the role and position of Muslims in the country. The Muslims have generally struggled hard to prove that they were loyal Indians by all means but Indian government, political parties and media generally suspect them.

The Hindu nationalists imposed on Indian Muslims the physical and psychological partition which served as a centrifugal force for South Asian regionalism. The attacks on the lives, property, honour and religious places of Muslims and demolishing of mosques and shrines sent negative message abroad, particularly the Muslims living in neighbouring countries. The failure of India's ruling elites to respect the religio-cultural identity of Muslims and protect their political interests and economic rights in the post – independence era reinforced the fears and concerns of Muslims living in other South Asian countries and hence served as a negative force for South Asian regionalism.

REFERENCES:

- Ahmad, Manzoor. "Integration Theory and the Role of the Core State in Regional Organizations." *Regional Studies*, **31** (1), 41–71 (Summer 2013).
- Ahmad, Manzoor. "Integration Theory and the Role of the Core State in Regional Organizations." *Regional Studies*, **31** (1), 41–71 (Summer 2013).
- It was an estimated Muslim population of these states in 2010. For details see, Maps of the World. Top Ten Countries with Largest Muslim Population. Retrieved December 15, 2014, from <http://www.mapsofworld.com/world-top-ten/world-top-ten-countries-with-largest-muslim-populations-map.html>
- "Star enters new era, 2012," *Daily Star*. November 17, (2012). Retrieved December 15, 2014, from <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=257803>
- Maass, C. D. South Asia: Drawn Between Cooperation and Conflict" *South Asian Survey*, **3** (1&2), 259–76 (1996).
- Crick, Emily. Contact Sport: Cricket in India–Pakistan Relations Since 1999. *South Asian Survey*, **16** (1) 59–79 (2009).
- Parekh, Rauf. Review of *The Hindi-Urdu controversy*, by Abdul Jamil Khan, *Dawn*, December 31, (2006). Retrieved December 15, 2014, from <http://archives.dawn.com/weekly/books/archive/061231/books7.htm> accessed on 30.9.2010.
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- M. S. Gowalkar, *We, or our Nationhood Defined*, (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939) cited by Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Cited by Punj, Balbir K. Hindu Rashtra. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 6–17 (2003).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Punj, Balbir K. Hindu Rashtra. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 6–17 (2003).
- Maass, C. D. South Asia: Drawn Between Cooperation and Conflict. *South Asian Survey*, **3** (1&2), 259–76 (1996).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003); Khanum, Sadia. Muslims in Globalized India, 1991–2007: An Analysis. M. Phil. Thesis, International Islamic University Islamabad, 36, (2011).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Khanum, Sadia. Muslims in Globalized India, 1991–2007: An Analysis. M. Phil. Thesis, International Islamic University Islamabad, 102–128, (2011).
- Setalvad, Teesta. After the Gujarat Pogrom. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.) 123–35, (2003).
- Lal, C. K. The Complexities of Border Conflicts in South Asia. *South Asian Survey*, **13** (2), 253–63 (2006).
- Khanum, Sadia. Muslims in Globalized India, 1991–2007: An Analysis. M. Phil. Thesis, International Islamic University Islamabad, 102–128, (2011).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- Cited by Haider, Zaglul. A Revisit to the Indian Role in the Bangladesh Liberation War. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, **44** (5) 537–551 (2009).
- Bidwai, Praful. A Critique of Hindutva. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 8–32 (2003).
- RSS converts 350 Muslims to Hinduism, say papers. *Dawn*. December 11, (2014). Retrieved December 31, 2014, from <http://www.dawn.com/news/1150097>
- In challenge to Modi, India Hindu group to convert Muslims, Christians. *Japan Times*. December 21, (2014). Retrieved December 31, 2014, from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/21/world/social-issues-world/challenge-modi-india-hindu-group-convert-muslims-christians/#.VP32JXyUfOc>
- Srivastava, Piyush. 'We will free India of Muslims and Christians by 2021': DJS leader vows to continue 'ghar wapsi' plans and restore 'Hindu glory.' *Mail Online India*. December 19, (2014). Retrieved December 31, 2014, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2879597/We-free-India-Muslims-Christians-2021-DJS-leader-vows-continue-ghar-wapsi-plans-restore-Hindu-glory.html>

29. Zafar , Salleem and Awais Bin Wasi. Terrorism in India: Method in Madness. *Policy Perspectives*, **7** (2), 51–74 (Jul.- Dec. 2010).
30. Bhaumik, Saba Naqvi. Politics of Indian War Films. *South Asian Journal*, (Oct. – Dec.), 85–93 (2005).
31. Crick, Emily. Contact Sport: Cricket in India–Pakistan Relations since 1999. *South Asian Survey*, **16** (1) 59–79 (2009).
32. Prime Minister’s High Level Committee, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India. Social, Economic and Education Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report, (November, 2006). Retrieved December 31, 2014, from <http://www.zakatindia.org/images/Sachar-Report-05-March-2012.pdf>; and also from <http://www.mfsd.org/sachar/leafletEnglish.pdf>
33. Khanum, Sadia. Muslims in Globalized India, 1991–2007: An Analysis. M. Phil. Thesis, International Islamic University Islamabad, 39–58 and 129–85, (2011).
34. Engineer. Asghar Ali. *Muslims and India*. (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 7–11, (2006).