

**THE DRAVIDA NADU EXPERIENCE:
SECURITY, STATE-BUILDING AND SECESSION FROM A PENINSULAR STANDPOINT**

By

Swarna Rajagopalan

The separatist agendas of the Pakistan Movement and the Dravidian Movement evolved more or less simultaneously, in a post-Bengal Partition political climate of mass mobilization around identity issues. The former came to fruition with Partition and the creation of the new state of Pakistan. The demand for Dravida Nadu, remaining a part of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's political platform for two decades, was dropped unceremoniously, overnight in November 1963. In light of India's subsequent encounters with secessionism, this presents to us a curious instance from which we may learn something about southern security and insecurities—the subject of this conference.

To this end, this paper poses several broadly worded questions about security, state-building and secession, which it answers by delving into the history and rhetoric of the Dravida Nadu movement itself. In this way it hopes to identify a set of criteria whereby we might begin to understand what it means to be from South India and to seek security within a statist paradigm.

TWO DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

There are two important definitional issues to be settled at the outset. First, how and why do we define 'peninsular India'? Second, what are the standpoints from which we raise the questions we raise?

What do we mean by 'Peninsular India'?

There is nothing axiomatic about the definition of 'peninsular India,' any more than there is about the definition of 'India' itself. Modern India, the Republic of India, is divided along many east-west axes, none co-terminous. The first is the line formed by the Vindhyas and it is reflected in popular

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

discussions of life and attitudes north and south of the Vindhyas. This resonates in another notional dividing line—between the ‘Aryan’ north where Indo-European languages are spoken and the ‘Dravidian’ south with its distinctive linguistic family. One might take the mythical crossing by the sage Agastya of the Vindhyas as a record of the settlement by people from the Indo-Gangetic plains and the spread of their culture in the southern reaches of the subcontinent. The linguistic line is institutionalized in modern times by yet another one—the boundaries of the Indian Republic’s provincial units. By this double demarcation (of language and law), peninsular India may be taken to connote the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, as well as the union territory of Pondicherry.

The most semantically accurate understanding of peninsular India is that which includes all the littoral regions of India’s long coastline. This would include a large number of India’s states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal, as well as the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry. There is great cultural diversity in this collection of units, but more politically salient perhaps are the variations in political clout and levels of development, both across and within the states.

This begs the question that we might ask in the case of all these definitions: how are we to assume that there is a consonance of interests, an identity of experiences and consequently, any similarity in the ways that individuals and groups across this large area view any issue—security or otherwise? The answer to this is that we cannot assume such a thing. No matter how we demarcate ‘peninsular India,’ we will not have a group of people within that region whose views will be similar, and we are likely to find their interests mutually inimical.

Why bother then with this exercise? The answer lies in the power equation between the regions that constitute India’s political center and the rest of India, lying on their periphery. First, the weight of

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

history as we recall and narrate it, promotes a collective memory of the Indo-Gangetic plains as historical center-stage. History turns on the sequence of events in this part of the subcontinent and regional histories are relegated to the status of sideshows or responses to the events at the center. Second, the demographic reality of India's electoral democracy is that population-based demarcation of constituencies benefits the populous states of the Hindi heartland. This means that both an economically backward Orissa and an industrially advanced Maharashtra are relegated to the status of balancers and/or supplicants within this system. This is changing somewhat with the advent of coalition politics, but not significantly enough to obliterate the distance between these states and the central government. Thus, it is these states that have taken turns in hosting opposition conclaves and discussions on state autonomy. Thus, on both historical and institutional grounds, regions identified by any of these four definitions lie outside the inner circle of power in India.

In short, it is the shared experience of life on the periphery of India's politics that may be said to be the common thread in 'peninsular India.' A peninsular view of security is likely to mean a peripheral view of security, and we might expect to find themes of alienation, negligence and relative deprivation, cultural and other hegemony in such a security discourse.

What is the definition of 'peninsular India' that this paper will adopt? To include all India's coastal states and territories leaves us with an analytically unwieldy subject. Further, historical discontinuities and cultural distances mitigate against the shared peripheral status of the peoples included within this definition. The option of using the Vindhyas as a dividing marker merely complicates this further; it adds to our consideration Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh! The third option of regarding central India as marking cultural if not civilizational faultlines may be politically fungible but it essentializes both sides of those faultlines. What we are left with then is to use the four southern states and Pondicherry as the core of this region, 'peninsular India,' and to acknowledge upfront that they have not and do not share common interests, that the borders between Karnataka and Andhra

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

Pradesh and the states immediately to their north are fuzzy and that this is a mere analytical convenience, open to critique and dispute. What it is handy for, in the context of this paper's subject matter, is the speculative extension of our findings from the Dravida Nadu movement to those regions that the movement's leaders sought to include within this country.

Points of Departure, Points of View

The second definitional issue to consider is the standpoint from which the conference problematique is being framed. The seminar is titled 'Security dimensions of Peninsular India.' Implicit in this title is a set-subset relationship between peninsular India and India as a whole. The question of referent is left open, but as framed the title could refer to either the security of the whole as the part affects it, the security of the part as the whole affects or something else altogether. But the whole is ever-present when you define the part as part. That is, this is not a seminar about the littoral regions of the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal but of a certain segment of an Indian whole. Therefore, prior to the consideration of the security dimensions of the part, must come an assumption regarding the security dimensions of the whole.

This means that even as this paper tries to ascertain what makes peninsular India and peninsular Indians (and these are not the same thing) secure, it needs to recapitulate some of the standard issues featuring in the nation-state security calculus. This is a smorgasbord that includes first order questions about the physical and population base of the state, as well as its ideational underpinnings. It also includes discussions of institutional stability and the ability of institutions to adapt to change. In the case of new states, it is these first order issues—which we might classify as state-building issues—that are most often sources of insecurity and of conflict, both within and without.¹ In other words, we are concerned with putting states together and keeping them from falling apart (through

¹ Barry Buzan. 1991. *People, States & Fear*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Mohammed Ayoob. 1995. *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

secession). State-building and secession are thus appropriate discussion areas for this paper, since its concern with an Indian whole precedes its interest in peninsular India and Indians.

Secessionist movements provide a showcase for all that went or is wrong with a particular state-building effort. However, when the demand for secession is given up through a non-violent process, we really have an opportunity to study what feeling secure within a state means, what the terms are on which a group will permit itself to be included into the mainstream and how alienation comes to be replaced by integration. The Dravida Nadu movement is a case in point, and because it identified closely with peninsular India, it is especially appropriate that we call on it in our investigation of what security might mean to this part of the country and to people in it.

DRAVIDA NADU: A BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTE

The origins of the Dravidian movement lay in the championing by merchant-princes and landed professionals of South India of an expansion of representation and political access.² These men came from every ethnic group found in the Madras Presidency and they were members of land-owning and commercial castes. In 1909, they formed the Madras Non-Brahmin Association, which became the South Indian Liberal Federation in 1916 and was later known as the Justice Party. The objective was to redress the dominance of Tamil Brahmins in the administrative sphere. The Justice Party contested elections to the Madras legislature between 1920 and 1935 as a way to better the lot of non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency.

In this period, several things happened. First, in the rural areas, a deteriorating relationship between untouchables and the local dominant castes (which happened to be the castes from which the JP drew its membership) led to conversions to Islam, costing the Justice Party its base from among both the untouchables and Muslims. Second, E.V. Ramaswami, who came to be known as Periyar,

² This historical account is based on Rajagopalan, *State and Nation in South Asia*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2001, pp. 136-141, 151-157, 164-167.

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

led an exodus of depressed caste members out of the Congress Party to start the Self-Respect Movement. Third, this movement for radical social reform, which became the natural heir to the JP mantle, became closely identified also with the anti-Hindi movement. In 1937, C. Rajagopalachari's Congress government introduced compulsory Hindi in 125 schools. Mobilizing mass support for an agitation against this policy, under Periyar's leadership the anti-Hindi and social reform planks were conflated. A new equation of Brahmin-Hindi-North-Aryan and Non-Brahmin-Tamil-South-Dravidian emerged in the rhetoric of Presidency politics. Moreover, in the aftermath of the struggle against the Partition of Bengal, local ethno-linguistic consciousness grew, dividing those who might have jointly led a Dravidian movement. This was reinforced by the Congress' support for linguistic provinces and its subsequent reorganization along those lines. After the Madras Pradesh Congress was divided into Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Madras units, what was left of Madras was all Tamil country, giving rise to the demand that such a unit should be named for its linguistic majority as well.

This groundswell of ethnic consciousness among the masses mobilized by Periyar acquired separatist tones in the early 1940s, parallel to the Pakistan movement. In fact, one of the triggers for this was that when the Pakistan Resolution was adopted in 1940, the Madras Congress Legislative Party saw fit to pass a supporting resolution.³ Although this was subsequently rescinded, it confirmed the feeling among Periyar's followers that the Congress was more concerned about the rights of North Indian Muslims than the depressed classes. It seemed as if British rule would be replaced by that of another alien, but this one with a vested interest that was harmful to most in Madras Presidency. Between 1940 and 1947, the Dravidian movement progressed steadily towards secession, with the demand for a separate Dravidanadu state entering the Dravidar Kazhagam's constitution in August

³ K. Rajayyan. 1982. *History of Tamil Nadu*, 1565-1982. Madras: Raj Publishers. pp. 380; Rajmohan Gandhi. 1997. *Rajaji: A Life*. New Delhi: Penguin India. pp 225, 234-240, 243-4. Both of these are cited in Rajagopalan. 2001. *State and Nation in South Asia*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. pp. 138.

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

1944.⁴ The movement split in 1949 with Periyar leading one section as the Dravidar Kazhagam, which would continue to function as a social movement outside mainstream politics. C.N. Annadurai led the other faction, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which participated in electoral politics, winning control of the Madras Corporation in 1959. In 1962, C.N. Annadurai went to Parliament as a member of the Rajya Sabha.

In all these years, the DMK continued to espouse its secessionist ideal, with Anna using Parliament as a venue for speeches on the subject. The Congress ruled Madras state, and that contributed immensely to the popularity of the DMK. C. Rajagopalachari introduced the second of the educational reforms that, in spite of the public fondness for Nehru and loyalty to the Congress, led to his party's downfall. Making vocational training mandatory, his government decided that each child should learn the traditional trade of his parents, reinforcing caste-based occupational distinctions. This was precisely what the Self-Respect Movement had been fighting against over the years and was, naturally, completely unacceptable to people.

In addition, two other factors militated against the post-freedom struggle support for the Congress. The first was a pervasive sense of neglect. It was felt that in the apportionment of development monies, the south had been shortchanged over and over again. The second was the feeling that if only Tamil areas were left in Madras state, then the state should be renamed Tamil Nadu. This, inexplicably, failed to garner support at the center and even in 1963, in the middle of the Parliamentary debates where Annadurai was trying to elucidate the reasons why his party was demanding a separate state, a Rajya Sabha bill to this effect introduced by the Communist Party parliamentarian, Bhupesh Gupta, failed to pass. Secession was a necessity because clearly no progress was possible in a Brahmin-Bania dominated, Congress-led India.

⁴ C.N. Annadurai. 1985. *Ilatchiya Varalaaru*. Fourth edition. Madras: Maruti Press. pp. 9-10. Cited in Rajagopalan. 2001. *State and Nation in South Asia*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. pp. 139.

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

1962-1963 marks a watershed in the history of the Dravida Nadu demand. The party stand on secession was both challenged and reinforced by events outside and in Parliament. In 1962, India and China went to war. The DMK suspended its secessionist agenda, raising record funds in support of the war effort. The justification was, without an India, there could be no secession. Shortly after the war, in anticipation of the imposition of Hindi at the end of fifteen years from the commencement of the constitution, the DMK launched another anti-Hindi agitation, protesting that this would hugely disadvantage non-Hindi speakers. Nehru responded to this with an early assurance that the change in Official Language would be delayed as long as non-Hindi speakers wished. This was later written into the law. While these were signs of mutual conciliation—with the DMK suspending its demands in a time of crisis and the Prime Minister hastening to reassure non-Hindi speakers—in early 1963, the National Integration Commission advised the adoption of a constitutional amendment that would outlaw secession. In spite of Annadurai's pleas in Parliament that such a bill would violate the right to self-determination and was no substitute for seeking to understand the reasons why secessionist demands were made, the bill passed. There would be no conciliatory moves on this question. The DMK's surprising response to this was to drop the demand for secession overnight.

In November 1963, the DMK constitution was amended and the demand for Dravida Nadu was replaced by a proposal to set up a Dravida Union within the framework of the Indian constitution with maximum autonomy. While there has been no talk of a Dravida Union, the Dravida movement's offshoot parties, which have had a stranglehold on Tamil Nadu politics since 1967, have consistently been in the forefront of any effort to increase state autonomy and minimize central intervention.

A PENINSULAR APPROACH TO SECURITY, STATE-BUILDING AND SECESSION?

Do Tamil nationalists typify a southern or peninsular sense of separateness? One might argue thus only because the Dravida Nadu movement may be read as South India's most unambiguous expression of separateness and alienation. Therefore, this case is used in this paper heuristically to discern whether there is something distinctive about the way in which peninsular India might understand security.

This section begins by posing those three broad questions with regard to the Dravida Nadu case that are elementary to any security analysis: whose security, what does security mean to that referent and how is security achieved. Then, as discussed in the definitional section, it will try to understand how the process of state-building which lies at the root of a state's security agenda and the demand for secession are construed in the discourse of a peripheral region within the state.

Security:

1. Whose security?

The history of the Dravidian movement in general and particularly the Dravida Nadu moment in that history suggest a widening of the circle of referents, at each stage. In the first phase, when the commercial and landed oligarchs of non-Brahmin society in Madras began to organize with a view to increasing their own access to government and political power, their concerns centered around an upper class, non-Brahmin elite whose ethnic origins were mixed. In the second phase of the Self-Respect Movement under Periyar's leadership, this extended to all members of Dravidian (non-Brahmin, South Indian) society, irrespective of class and rural or urban location. Then, began a transition to a territorialized sense of identity and a territorialized articulation of grievances whereby the numbers of those for whom the movement spoke both expanded and shrank. Their numbers expanded to include all those who spoke and loved Tamil, including Brahmins who fit that category. At the time, they shrank to exclude non-Tamil speakers whose localized struggles for separation

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

from Madras Presidency undermined a larger Dravidian identity and southern Dravida Nadu. In the next phase, after 1947, with secession finding a formal place in the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's platform, there were two referents; each was a response to one particular context in which discussions about group security, identity and rights arose. Within the politics of Madras Presidency, the Dravidian movement's referent continued to be the 'backward' castes. Within the context of Indian national politics, the referent was Tamizhagam, the nation of Tamil-speakers, for whom the separate state of Dravida Nadu was sought. During the 1962 India-China war, all referents were subsumed within the very entity of the Indian state from which secession had been sought. The argument for this was that in the absence of an Indian state, there could be no context for a Tamil struggle for freedom. This shows a consciousness that survival is not an absolute but relative and conditional state. Without India, there could be no self-determination for Tamils. Without Tamil support (especially given the record-breaking collections by the DMK for national defence), there was less chance of an Indian survival in the face of war with China. After the Chinese war, due to reasons listed above, the demand for secession was shelved and what obtains is a focus first on Tamil concerns and then on national concerns but a view of these as not antagonistic but mutually dependent security contexts. This is true even when faced with the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka—Tamil Nadu stands its ground when it comes to expressing sympathy for the Sri Lankan Tamils, but does so from a location within the Indian mainstream.

To summarize, from the point of view of the Dravidian movement, the referent whose security was being addressed was an ever-growing subset of the larger Indian national or civilization unit. From the narrower perspective of the Dravida Nadu movement, the referent was ethnically and regionally defined. The latter perspective also defined the referent in relational terms, and hence it came to identify the security of that larger Indian unit as a precondition for the security of its primary referent.

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

If we extrapolate from this a peninsular answer to the ‘whose security’ question, the answer might be: a smaller, more localized, group whose security while linked to that of larger groups and collectivities, is none the less separate and distinctive. The issues making it secure and insecure are different and at times, the subset and the larger unit are mutual threats. From such a view, to understand national security, you would build a picture from the ground up—the security first of substate, or constituent units, and then that of the aggregate, understanding that as a sum of the parts and not much more. This view is quite antithetical to the prevalent national security perspective that privileges the aggregate over its constituents.

Further, it is a view that raises doubts about dimensions considered fundamental to the security of the aggregate. If the security of the part is prior to the security of the whole, then both the outer and inner territorial demarcations of the state-aggregate are merely lines open to debate and redrawing. Second, the identity of the aggregate and therefore its ideational politics must be derivative of the parts. Third, security words and actions by the state-aggregate have legitimacy only to the extent that the parts concur with them. Indeed the legitimacy of the state-aggregate follows from the consent of the part(s).

Because peninsular Indians belong to many groups, separate and crosscutting, conflicts of interest are also plausible. The Tamil Nadu-Karnataka disputes of sharing of Cauvery waters come to mind. Then the security of the subset becomes contingent upon the ability and willingness of the aggregate to intervene on its behalf or mediate, and to enforce some sort of adjudication. In this case, the security of the aggregate may acquire greater importance than it might otherwise have from this standpoint. Calling on the strength of other parts, the aggregate is also a guarantor against external threats, externally imposed losses and also natural disasters. Central interventions in times of cyclones are a case in point.

2. *What does security mean?*

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

At the outset, let me clarify that the term security does not figure in the writing or rhetoric of the Dravidian movement or even the Dravida Nadu campaign. Answers to all these questions are being drawn out contextually and are open to debate.

In the first phase, the leadership of what became the Dravidian movement sought greater access and greater political representation for their caste and class interests. In the second phase when a mass social reform movement transformed into an ethno-regional movement, the accent was first on the day to day survival conditions for the vast majority of South Indians and then it was the cultural rights of Tamil speakers. In the secessionist phase of the movement, security was self-determination and survival lay in separation from the aggregate. Membership of the aggregate was tantamount to consenting to neglect, cultural hegemony and second-class status. The 1962 war created a prior condition for this—the survival of the aggregate from which separation was sought. A Chinese conquest of India would necessitate a two-tiered struggle for self-determination—first, freedom from the Chinese and second, freedom from India. Dropping the demand for secession a year later, the DMK turned its attention to securing regional autonomy within the aggregate. Security is thus the right to make decisions and garner resources locally.

In the history of the Dravida Nadu demand and the Dravidian movement, although the word ‘security’ is never used, it seems that the allusion is to both a very narrow, immediate security as survival (in the face of caste oppression, as an identity group and in the context of the 1962 war) and a broader understanding that all survival is contingent upon political and economic access, and that language and social reform are key to acquiring and securing such access. While there were large-scale arrests in the 1960s anti-Hindi agitation, the use of coercive force was still minimal, so little as to be insignificant, on both sides. Therefore, the discussion of security does not refer to survival in the face of physical but structural violence. The issues that animated the Self-Respect Movement related to very fundamental issues of human rights and dignity, which are often raised in discussions

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

of individual security. In addition, at stake through both the earlier demands for access to the administration and political influence and the later anti-Hindi movement, was the right to livelihood. Thus, the secondary understanding of security is in terms of a human rights-based approach to security. Both of these are easily extrapolated to the larger peninsular context.

3. How is security achieved?

This question may be interpreted in two ways. First, we might take it to mean: what were the means whereby the Dravidian movement, including in its Dravida Nadu phase, sought to secure its primary constituency? The second interpretation is: if the dropping of the Dravida Nadu demand and its non-revival may be taken as signs that the Tamil/Dravidian community is now secure, then what might be the factors that facilitated that security? In other words, we might look for an agency-oriented answer or a structure-oriented answer to this question. There is a third implicit question: insofar as the state was threatened by this demand, how did it respond to secure itself?

In answer to the first interpretation, we find, over the various phases, that the leaders of the Dravidian movement used the entire range of methods available to them short of violent insurgency. Petition, lobbying, electioneering, mass mobilization for specific campaigns, political education including sophisticated use of cinema for the same, agitation and parliamentary debate were all deployed at different stages of the movement's history. The leadership proved very skilled at each, successfully taking the movement from strength to strength. The movement stopped short of using violence, something that is quite striking to us in our time. This may be attributed to the early and positive responses of the Indian state under Nehru, but it is also consistent with subsequent claims by the DMK leadership that the demand for Dravida Nadu was symbolic and intended to highlight Tamil grievances.

This makes the second interpretation particularly interesting. The fact that the demand for Dravida Nadu was withdrawn leads us to the natural assumption that there was a change in the feeling of

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

alienation felt by members (or at least leaders) of the Dravidian movement, and that they now felt secure in India. What could have created that security? First of all, if the demand was at bottom a symbolic one, then to court arrest once the anti-secession amendment was passed would be counter-productive as it would place the leadership incommunicado. Second, the fact that the Indian state did respond positively to demands emanating from the regions—witness both the linguistic reorganization of states and the reassurances on language policy—must have served to assuage some of their doubts. Third, offering C.N. Annadurai a seat in Parliament allowed him more than a ringside view of Indian politics. Going by his own speeches, the experience seems to have convinced him that at least Nehru's intentions were honorable, and the mutual respect and trust would have contributed a great deal to his capacity to endorse a decision like that to give up Dravida Nadu. Finally, it seems as if the decision to suspend the demand during the Indo-China war reflected more than a political calculation. It is possible that beneath the rhetoric, there was really some identification with the state-aggregate, India. In other words, pragmatism about how to achieve one's objective, sensitivity and reciprocity on the part of the antagonist, inclusion and the chance to discover ties that did exist—all contributed to creating enough security that the DMK leadership was willing to change its mind about secession, a cause they had espoused for almost twenty years. Insofar as the Indian state was threatened, it responded with a constitutional amendment that limited the freedom of speech. There was no recourse to violence on its part. In addition, other measures like the reassurance on Hindi and the Rajya Sabha seat for Annadurai served as some measure of good faith on its part. This is quite remarkable by the standards of our times when states are both less responsive and more repressive.

State-building and Secession:

1. *What does the state-building process mean for groups within the state?*

A crucial aspect of state-building is that the relationship borne by the unit or part to the state aggregate is redefined. This redefinition has physical, ideational and institutional aspects, and the process and substance of their redefinition are important determinants of how state-building itself comes to be regarded by the groups that make up the state.

The Dravida Nadu movement was first a response to the imposition of Hindi in schools in the mid-1930s. With this anti-Hindi agitation grew a politicized ethnic consciousness, which as a result of other linguistic groups claiming their territorial space, identified with a specific land area as well. The rhetoric of the Dravida Nadu movement reflected resentment on the following counts: being subsumed within a larger identity without being asked, having decisions made without being able to truly participate in their making and being neglected, especially in the dispensation of financial resources.

When the Indian state came into being, the DMK was gaining ground in the Tamil areas of Madras Presidency, but it was not the party that represented the region in the Constituent Assembly. These were the years in which its leaders were arguing for a southern Dravidian federation and asserting their separate nationhood, like that of Pakistan. The constitution of the Indian Union, the demarcation of units and recognized languages, and the federal equation were all debated without the participation of the region's largest social movement. This reinforced pre-independence fears of northern and upper caste domination, as well as underscored the emotional distance between Madras and Delhi. The chipping away at Madras Presidency by linguistic groups, and central approval of those demands, would have seemed to say that this indeed was a distant elite that did not care to ascertain how the Tamil people felt about anything. It has only been in the years after the

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

dropping of the Dravida Nadu demand and since the Dravidian movement's capture of power at the state level that Tamil Nadu has been able to assert and negotiate its own relationship with the center. It is possible that other parts and peoples of peninsular India feel the same way with regard to the aggregate and its agent, the Government of India. At different stages, central intervention in local affairs has evoked outrage and a resurgence of ethno-regional loyalty. For instance, the early 1980s crisis in Andhra Pradesh where there was repeated central intervention in state affairs led to the formation of the Telugu Desam Party which has maintained a stranglehold on popular politics in the state. Insofar as state-building at the aggregate level is defined in terms of the erasure of local identities and the slighting of local authority, it will be viewed first as a threat to groups and communities within the state. The more identified the group is to a certain territory the more invasive the state-building process appears.

Given how parliamentary representation and center-state financial relations are set up under the Indian constitution, moreover, a state outside the Gangetic plains feeling sidelined and neglected is a predictable corollary. This is underscored by the fact that the peninsular states do better on both social and economic development indices than those states that seem to dominate the polity. The Catalonia syndrome is never far away—the reluctance to bear the burden of those who cannot keep up and hold their own. State-building then gives too little and asks for too much. This accounts for the peninsular states remaining at the forefront of autonomy negotiations and taking the lead in the liberalization (i.e., liberation from the centralized economy) race.

2. What are the ways in which the state and group impinge on each other's sense of security?

The key to answering this question lies in the way that the state-group relationship is configured in the founding documents of the state.

If the state-aggregate is defined and identified through an erasure of identities within its borders, if it monopolizes significant forms of revenue collection, if representation is not fair and reflective of

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

actual numbers, and if there is no mechanism for giving voice to concerns and grievances, then the very existence of the state aggregate threatens groups within its boundaries. To the extent that this is so, then every word or action on the part of the group that challenges or questions the state-aggregate or its agents may be seen as undermining the identity and threatening the continuance of the state in its current form. In such a dispensation, both state and group are locked in an antagonistic relationship. Assertiveness on either's part is intrinsically a threat to the other.

Thus, the prospect of Hindi becoming the official language of India in 1965 was seen as a threat by Tamilians and the casting of their grievances in the form of a secessionist demand was seen as a threat by the Indian state. The ability of the Indian Prime Minister to offer reassurance on this question and the welcoming of the secessionist movement's leader into the national parliament was a conciliatory gesture, mirrored in support during the war and the withdrawal of secession from the political agenda of the DMK.

Where the relationship between groups and the state-aggregate is a negotiated one and the state's powers are those agreed upon in the negotiation, subject to the consent of the groups, the antagonistic element is kept out of the equation. A feedback or communication channel is usually built into such an arrangement, as well as the mechanism for renegotiation. This represents the difference between the Dravida Nadu case and the many later secessionist movements that India has seen. In the Nehru years, there was still enough of a commitment to democratic practice and institutions that, however imperfectly, the state-aggregate and the group managed to communicate with each other. With subsequent secessionist movements, as the leaders of the state-aggregate have shown weaker commitment to those same practices and institutions, the state's response has been slow, hard and often violent. By the same token, the secessionist group has also used violence, providing state violence with some semblance of legitimacy. Witness: Punjab, Assam, the Bodos, Kashmir.

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

3. *Under what circumstances is state-building an acceptable process from the point of view of sub-state groups? Under what circumstances is it unacceptable?*

The Dravida Nadu experience suggests three things. First, where states are even marginally responsive to the concerns of the sub-state group, it is possible for that group to envisage the working out of a modus vivendi with the state. Acts of inclusion consolidate this impression further, illuminating the fora and media through which the group might engage with the system. Second, secessionist groups do conduct a cost-benefit analysis, which influences their decision to drop or persist with a particular agenda. One reason that the Dravida Nadu demand was dropped was that after the anti-secessionist amendment, the entire leadership was liable to be arrested and unable to propagate any of the movement's ideals or participate in the political process. It was judged that staying outside jail and not speaking of secession was a better deal than courting arrest for a demand that in hindsight, many of them describe as symbolic anyway. There is a law of diminishing returns that applies to the use of coercion, however; beyond a certain threshold, the group has already incurred such a high cost for its demands that to settle for anything less would cost it even more. Third, the terms of integration need to be renegotiated from time to time. Midcourse review and correction should be possible without loss of face or prestige. At the commencement of the constitution, the Indian Union was divided into several categories of units; in 1956, nevertheless, in response to the demand for linguistic provinces, changes began to be made in the units and their names. This allowed other groups to expect the same as a likely response to their issues. Consistent with this expectation, the anti-Hindi agitation met with an understanding response from India's Prime Minister.

The thesis research on which this paper is based identified two principles that must guide state-building or national integration, in order that the process does not render anybody insecure and that it is acceptable to substate units and groups. The first of these is reconciliation and the second,

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

accommodation. In this paper it is the second principle that has been discussed most. It may be said to have three parts: acceptance of multiple, simultaneous loyalties; flexibility and early accommodation. The first entails a mindset that is not easily threatened by diversity of views, identities or interests. Flexibility is the willingness to embrace change as well as the impetus for it. Finally, because diversity is inescapable and change inevitable, that state is wisest that accommodates early in the process instead of allowing a long-drawn out conflict in which money, ego and lives get heavily invested. Such a state also gets off cheap—renaming a district rather than fighting a civil war, for instance.

The intractable and violent nature of conflicts that India faces today suggest that there are circumstances in which the group cannot give up its demand for secession and feel secure. We might conjecture that these circumstances are at the very least the mirror image of the ones in the preceding discussion. First, the state concerned is intransigent and unresponsive to the grievances of the group. The longer a group tries to communicate without success, the louder and more violent their communications are apt to get. Second, when a group feels that it loses more through acquiescence than through insurgency, there is no prevailing upon its leadership to join the mainstream. Kashmir is a very good—peripheral if not peninsular—example of this. Finally, regarding any dispensation as set in stone dooms those who wish to change it to break it rather than amend it. To this list, I would like to add ‘breach of promise.’ This is one of the most common causes of alienation within states.

To return to the primary concern of this paper and conference, then, how should we expect peninsular India and Indians to regard state-building and secession? The Dravida Nadu experience suggests that early political mobilization has left behind a populace conscious of its rights and its history. It is unlikely to accept any central fiat and it is likely to be mindful of whether or not it has been part of a decision-making process. Delhi is still far away for most peninsular Indians, and so

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

the idea of belonging to the Indian state has to be sold to them over and over again, both in affective terms and in cost-benefit terms. Hegemonic cultural policies, intervention in local politics and a perceived lack of financial even-handedness are all likely to be regarded as invasive and mischievous. The presence of strong regional parties, at least in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, ensures that such conditions trigger strong regional responses to threats from the center. On the other hand, a central government in which regional parties have a foothold, a central government able to play a fair mediator's role in local inter-state disputes and a central government that shows restraint in its interactions with state governments is likely to strengthen the idea that belonging to the Indian state enhances the well-being of peninsular states. This gives them an incentive to belong.

Summary:

The preceding discussion yields the following insights on security, state-building and secession as seen from peninsular India.

First, the term 'security' is applied primarily to one section of the state which is ethnically or locally defined, but the scope of which definition is apt to grow in response to changing circumstances. However, security of both part and whole are seen as related, even if the part is prior to the whole in this reckoning. Second, security is taken first to mean survival in the face of political exclusion, cultural threats and territorial counter-claims and then in a broader sense, to refer to a human rights-driven way of looking at being, belonging and survival. Finally, from the point of view, all available means of communication including violence, which was not used in the Dravida Nadu case, may be deployed. A sense of security can be provided through sensitivity, reciprocity and an invitation to sit at the political table.

State-building is a central part of the security scenario of most post-colonial states, and secession is the extreme expression of unwillingness to participate in that process. The Dravida Nadu movement is the only secessionist case in South India so while it is a unique experience what we are trying to

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

extrapolate and understand are feelings of alienation and the conditions of belonging, as we might find them in other parts of peninsular India. The first thing that stands out as we consider how people in southern India might view state-building is that it must seem distant, predatory and also unfairly demanding of them. The less a group or region has to do with framing the terms of belonging, the less inclusive those terms, the more rigid the framework, the more likely a sub-state group is to feel insecure. The more restive and demanding, the more ethnically conscious and territorially rooted a group, the more likely the state is to be threatened. Responsiveness, increasing the benefits of belonging over the costs of seceding, and being open to renegotiating the terms of the political contract all contribute to creating the circumstances in which a group will feel secure enough to acquiesce to being part of a state-aggregate.

**SOUTH INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON SECURITY AND STATE-BUILDING: PENINSULAR OR
PERIPHERAL?**

Having summarized what we might consider peninsular perspectives on security and state-building, we have to consider the possibility that there is nothing particularly peninsular or even South Indian about them. Is it possible that what we are postulating as a particular, regional view is in fact a view that is plausible and possible among people in any peripheral region? After all, the same concerns and conditions might be said to obtain in North-east India or Kashmir or even West Bengal, as we have listed here.

Furthermore, in reflecting on this question through the narrow lens of the Dravida Nadu experience, we have left no room to consider that the central geographical feature of peninsular India—its long coastline—plays any part in its understandings of security. Geography—the coastline and also the swift, seasonal rivers, the hills and plateau—limits the possibilities for both development and survival to small and large communities both. The sea-faring history of the peninsula—taking Indians out of and bringing others in to this region—has also had a role to play in

Rajagopalan, The Dravida Nadu Experience

its economic and cultural development, and in the survival of its institutions. Ethnic kin communities are also a significant factor in the lives, politics and security of people in this area. This paper does not really allow for a full consideration of such factors. They remain to be addressed elsewhere and at greater length.

What this paper does is to offer a first-cut look through a familiar lens. This has allowed us to conjecture and come up with some insights that might be discussed in the meeting today and thereafter. These insights may be tested by another researcher as hypotheses, using a larger number of cases or another methodology altogether. In doing these things, this paper has tried to concretely articulate a perspective of great importance and one often overlooked in the study of states and politics—that of the region and its people.