

Chapter Two

India: Documenting Great Cultural Diversities But a Shared Democratic Political Community

Introduction: Why Our Focus on India?

India would seem to be one of the most difficult cases for our argument that multiple and complementary identities, and democratic state-nation loyalties, are possible even in a polity with significant “politically robust multinational” dimensions, as well as intense linguistic and religious differences. Let us briefly document how multiple these diversities actually are.

For many of its citizens, India is a “Nation State”, for others what we would call, a “State Nation”. However, India also has some dimensions of a “multinational society”. What do we mean, and not mean, by this later assertion?

All societies and polities have a degree of diversity, but for comparative purposes we can say that, at any given time, societies may be divided analytically into three different categories:

1. Societies that have strong cultural diversity, some of which is territorially-based and politically articulated by significant groups who, in the name of nationalism and self determination, advance claims of independence.
2. Societies that are quite culturally diverse, but whose diversity is nowhere organized by territorially-based politically significant groups, mobilizing nationalist claims for independence.
3. Societies that may appear to be relatively culturally homogeneous.

In this book we will call countries, part of whose territory falls into category 1, “robustly politically multinational”. Canada (owing to Quebec), Spain (especially owing to the Basque

Country and Catalonia), and Belgium (owing to Flanders), are “robustly politically multinational”.¹ Switzerland and the United States are both sociologically diverse and multicultural. However, since neither country has significant territorially based groups, mobilizing claims for independence, both countries clearly fall into category 2, not category 1. Countries such as Japan, Portugal, and the Scandinavian countries fall into category 3.

Where is India? India, owing to the Kashmir Valley alone, is a category 1 polity with some “robustly politically multinational” dimensions.² Furthermore, at various times Nagaland and Mizoram in the Northeast, the Khalistan movement in the Punjab, and the Dravidian movement in the South have also given a multinational dimension to Indian politics.³

¹The UK raises classification problems because it has no constitution but combines both unitary features, and with the devolved Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, some de facto asymmetrical federal features. Unlike Canada, Belgium, or India there are no major territorially concentrated areas in the UK where a minority language is the majority language. The United Kingdom has the Scottish National Party which advocates independence for Scotland and is a politically significant force in Scotland. This alone makes the UK “politically robustly multinational”. With the exception of the UK, all long standing democracies that are in this category are federal, and indeed, *de jure* and *de facto*, asymmetrically federal.

² If we divide Jammu and Kashmir into its three zones (Kashmir, Ladakh, and Jammu) the Kashmir zone meets our definition of being “politically robustly multinational”. In a recent public opinion poll with 1116 respondents in Kashmir (that tried to be close to a representative sample) it is clear that the Kashmir Valley is a territorially concentrated linguistic –cultural majority of Muslims who speak Kashmiri; of the sample in the Valley, 91.9% speak Kashmiri, and 98.9% said they are Muslim (only .1% speak Hindi, and only .4% are Hindus). Also a significant armed group has devoted much of their political energies to achieving greater autonomy or even independence. In the survey only 8.2% of those polled in the Kashmir Valley wanted to join Pakistan, but only 1.4 % agreed with the statement that “Kashmir should remain with India as it is”. See *Jammu and Kashmir; Assembly Election 2002: Findings of a Post-Poll Survey* by Lokniti , Delhi, February 2003.

³ On Kashmir see Sumatra Bose, *The Challenge in Kashmir* (London: Sage Publications,1997), for independence movements and secessionist wars in the Northeast see Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (London: Penguin Books,1994) and Ved Marwah, *Uncivil Wars: Pathology of Terrorism in India* (New Delhi:Harper Collins,1995). For a review of the literature on the Khalistan movement in the Punjab see Surinder S. Jodhka “ Looking Back at the Khalistan Movement: Some Recent Researches on its Rise and Decline” *Economic and Political Weekly* (April 21-27, 2001). For one of the most cited books about Tamil secession as a potential problem see Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). For two important reviews of the literature of the Dravidian movements see M.S.S. Pandian, “Beyond Colonial Crumbs: Cambridge School, Identity Politics and Dravidian Movement(s)”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (February 18-25, 1995):385-391 and N.Ram, “Dravidian Movement in its Pre-Independence Phases”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (February 1979):377-397.

In addition, Indians have had to nurture, defend, and try to deepen democracy in a sociological and political context where this multinational dimension interacts with more linguistic and religious diversity, and greater poverty, than found in any other long-standing democracy in the world.

One of the greatest conflicts in multi-cultural and multinational states, federal or not, is over language. In India, at Independence there were thirty different languages that were spoken by at least one million people, almost all with their own scripts. In descending order of number of speakers (excluding Hindi) Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, and Oriya were all spoken by between thirty-two to thirteen million inhabitants of India. The largest language, Hindi, according to the 1961 Census of India (which listed Urdu and Punjabi as separate languages) was only spoken by 30.37 percent of the total population.⁴ What would John Stuart Mill have said in 1947 about India's chances of building a democracy in such conditions? How has this "Millsian" problem been managed democratically?⁵

India's democracy should also be of great interest to contemporary comparativists because it has been developed in the context of religious diversity. Indian society has large communities of almost every world religion - Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, Sikh, and Christian. Even after partition in 1947, India had a major Islamic population. By 2006, India's Islamic population constituted a "minority" of at least 125 million, which makes it the world's third or fourth largest Islamic population in any country, exceeded only by Indonesia, Pakistan, and possibly by Bangladesh. At a time when many scholars and political activists are worrying about

⁴ For an analytic discussion of these figures see the classic, Jyotirindra Das Gupta, Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1970), pp.31-68.

⁵ His oft cited judgment about the impossibility of having more than one important functioning language and significant nationality in a democratic polity was "free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feelings, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion necessary to the working of representative institutions cannot exist". See John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), from *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. Geraint Williams (London: Everyman, 1993) ,p. 393.

the “clash of civilizations,” and some see Islamic society as being in deep cultural conflict with democracy, it is worth reflecting upon the fact that the world’s largest Islamic community with extensive democratic experience is in multi-cultural, multinational, federal, and consociational India.

Conceptually and comparatively India’s poverty raises important intellectual challenges, especially for those who might think that state-nation norms are a luxury of wealthy countries. One of the most enduring propositions in social science is Seymour Martin Lipset’s proposition that democracy correlates very strongly with overall socio-economic development.⁶ Arend Lijphart did not include India in his list of the twenty-one continuously democratic countries in the world from 1945-1980 because of Indira Ghandi’s imposition of an “emergency” from June 1975 to March 1977. However, in his most recent work, Lijphart considers India a democracy (and he now believes that he should have done so in the original volume).⁷ For purposes of comparison, if Lijphart had included India as a long-standing democracy it would have been an extraordinary exception to Lipset’s proposition. For example, India in 1985 had a per capita income that was 8.7 times lower than Ireland, the next poorest long-standing democracy in Lijphart’s list of twenty-one countries, and 14.2 times poorer than the average.⁸ India does not of course disprove Lipset’s proposition, which is probabilistic, but from the perspective of Lipset’s overall framework, India is, democratically speaking, one of the most “over-performing” countries in the world.

⁶ The classic initial formulation of this argument was Seymour Martin Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review* (March 1959): 69-105. Larry Diamond reviewed three decades of literature relevant to the development/democracy debate and concluded that the evidence broadly supports the Lipset proposition, see Diamond, “Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered”, in Gary Marks and Larry Diamond, eds., Re-examining Democracy (Newbury Park: Sage, 1992), pp. 93-139. Juan J. Linz and Stepan discuss Lipset’s proposition in their, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, p. 77.

⁷ See Arend Lijphart’s classic *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 38 for the list of the twenty-one countries, and his article in this volume for his current estimation.

⁸ Calculated using GDP per capita in 1985 at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) and current international prices. India’s GDP per capita in that year was US\$919 against an average of the other twenty countries of US\$13,093. Data are from World Bank, World Development Indicators database.

The question of India's comparative poverty also enhances its value as a case study. Of the four multi-national federal democracies in the world - Spain, Canada, Belgium, and India - India is the only country that is not an advanced industrial economy. The 1999 per capita income in US dollars of the four multinational federal systems in descending order was; Canada \$26,251, Belgium \$25,443, Spain \$18,079 and India \$2,248.⁹

Of course, India would be significant on grounds of population alone. With its population of slightly over one billion, it is almost four times more populous than any other democracy in the world. The next most populous democracy is the United States with a population of 260 million. The combined population in 2006 of the only other multi-national federal democracies - Spain, Canada, and Belgium – was less than 75 million, which is less than half the population of one of India's twenty-seven states, Uttar Pradesh.

A final reason why the study of Indian democracy should be of particular interest to comparativists is precisely because of the non-absorption of the Indian experience, or even Indian scholars, into the main-stream democratization literature, or even the “invisible colleges”, concerned with democracy. As we shall demonstrate, again and again in this book, comparative politics, and more importantly, our imaginations of politically possible alternatives for democracies, have been terribly constrained by this absence.¹⁰

⁹Figures are given in GDP per capita in US dollars at current prices in PPP terms in the World Bank's World Development Indicators database.

¹⁰ The founding literature in democratization studies virtually completely neglected India. Because of its focus on Latin America and Southern Europe there are no chapters on India in the pioneering four-volume series on democratisation edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, Transitions from Authoritarian Rule (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Because of the Linz/Stepan focus on post-communist Europe, Southern Europe, and Latin America they never discuss India. The multi-year study group led by Adam Przeworski that led to Sustainable Democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) did have an Indian participant but his topic was not democracy in India, but the formal modelling of democratic socialism. The distinguished Indian scholar of the politics of language, Jyotirindra Das Gupta, wrote the chapter on India in the three volume work edited by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, Democracy in Developing Countries (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989), but for most of the last 30 years Das Gupta's base has been at the University of California at Berkeley. In the main, Indian scholar's best know work in the social sciences has been on such themes as caste, language, nationalism, colonialism, and what is called “subaltern studies,” rather than on democratic institutions per se. Three excellent critical bibliographies on Indian, and non-Indian, scholarly writings in politics are found in Partha Chatterjee, ed., State and Politics in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 566-576, Sudipta Kaviraj ed., Politics in India (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Sunil Khilnani, The Idea of India (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997), pp. 217-242.

The analysis of democratic federalism in the multinational, multicultural society that is India thus presents an extraordinary challenge, and opportunity, for deepening our understanding of democracy in the modern world.

As comparativists, and as observers who have had the opportunity to visit many parts of India, we are very aware of India's continuing problems with low levels of literacy, nutrition, basic sanitation, as well as periodic communal riots. Some of these comparative problems are made abundantly clear in Table 4. (see table #4).

Table #4: *Comparative Indicators of India's Human and Income Poverty.*

Average GDP per Capita in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in 2000 (US Dollars) among Arend Lijphart's universe of the thirty-six continuous democracies of the world from at least 1977 to 1996	\$20,252
India's GDP per Capita in PPP in 2000 (US Dollars)	\$2,358
India's Human Development Index (HDI) Ranking among the 173 countries of the world ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	124/173
India's HDI Ranking among Arend Lijphart's thirty-six continuous democracies	34/36
India's Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) among the 88 developing countries ranked by the UNDP	55/88
Adult Female Literacy Rate in India	45.4%
Percentage of Underweight Children in India at age 5	47.0%

Sources: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 149-152, 157-159, 172, 190-193, and 224. Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999). See table 4.1 for Lijphart's universe of the thirty-six countries in the world that were all continuous democracies in his judgment from at least 1977 to 1996.

However, the focus of this chapter is on political institutions and perceptions of them as mechanisms for handling societal diversity and potential conflict. As writers about democracy and democratization in the world, and as students of nationalism, multi-nationalism, and diversity and extreme crises of “stateness” such as in the former USSR and Yugoslavia, we are convinced that India has more diversity than any long standing democracy in the world and that democracy nonetheless is increasingly supported by the overwhelming majority of these diverse groups in India. ¹¹ This pattern is not sufficiently recognized, not to say analyzed, by general readers or even by most specialist scholars, so one of our major tasks in this chapter is to attempt to document, and explain, these phenomena.

But first, comparatively, where does India fit as a polity?

Some Distinctive Features of the Indian Polity

The Republic of India is of course a unique polity among the relatively few stable democracies of the world. Since some basic characteristics of Indian society and polity are clearly distinct from the United States the experience of the American democracy is not always relevant, indeed at times can be quite misleading, for our understanding of India. Comparisons should not be limited to the federalism of the United States (or, for that matter, to the party system of the UK, as is often done), but should extend to other long-standing democracies as well. However, India shares many characteristics with a number of other democracies, particularly federal democracies which should allow us to understand better its problems, successes and failures. This facilitates some comparisons with the United States but also makes it necessary to think of India in the wider context of federal democracies. The United States and India are both among the eleven long-standing federal democracies of the world but their federal

structures have a different historical origins and different functions.¹² . Both are also major powers, something that differentiates them in many ways from smaller federal democracies, as we shall see.

Though both the United States and India are federal democracies, their form of government is very distinct. The U.S. is presidential, India is parliamentary, a distinction that has important implications for the working of democratic, even federal institutions, as we shall also see. However, the main difference is that India is substantially more diverse culturally, linguistically, and religiously than even the United States. Furthermore, some parts of the Indian republic, particularly in the North-East, introduce a multinational dimension into the Indian polity, and India's federal structures, to a certain extent, reflect a territorially-based pluralism. In contrast, the United States, in spite of its multi-culturalism, is more homogeneous than India, its pluralism has no territorial basis, and federalism does not reflect that pluralism directly partly because, unlike India, Canada, Spain, and Belgium, the United States does not have a politically robust multinational dimension.

As we shall analyze in more detail later, the large body of theorizing and analysis of multi-culturalism in the United States and in Europe as the result of large-scale immigration from other societies in recent decades, is only in part relevant to India. This is so because in India the multi-cultural characteristics are the result of a long history and have a distinctive territorial basis

¹² The eleven federal countries that have been functioning democracies for at least the last 15 years are India, USA, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Australia, Brazil, Argentina and Canada. Belgium's long transformation from a unitary to a federal state was only completed in 1993 but it had increasingly functioned as a federal system since the 1970's. Mexico is federal but it did not complete its democratic transition until 2000. Occasionally we will give data on Russia, but the nature of its political system raises serious questions about its democracy. Nigeria is at best a marginal electoral democracy but it is not long-standing, nor is South Africa. In addition, while we disagree with those who say that South Africa does not have a federal constitution, we acknowledge that due to the dominant position of the ANC at virtually all levels of the government South Africa does not politically function as a federal system yet, but when the ANC eventually becomes less hegemonic, South Africa will begin to have more federal politics. Venezuela has had direct elections since 1958. However, despite its federal constitution Venezuela did not have direct elections at the state level until the late 1980's. Furthermore, the Chávez inspired Constitution of 1999 abolished the Senate. Some might nominate Malaysia or Indonesia but Malaysia is not democratic and Indonesia is not Federal.

to which Indian federalism has been a response. Witness the creation of the new linguistic states in the 1950s and the process of the creation of new states that continues to this day. It should be noted that although the latest wave of creation of three states (Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh) in 2000 was not on the basis of languages, it did reflect the logic of political representation of diversities, for these states gave better representation to tribal populations or culturally different groups.

India, in contrast to many countries in the developing world, has a relatively strong and usable state with a government, a bureaucracy, an army, a judiciary, and above all, democratic institutions which enjoy considerable legitimacy and are able to exercise their authority over most of its population and territory. The state, born of the struggle for independence and the sad experience of the partition, has become a basic reality that makes possible the functioning of democratic government.

As we shall document, the overwhelming majority of Indian citizens respect the Indian State and generally expect it to serve the collective interests of its citizens. Also, some of the data we will present later on comparative trust in state institutions shows how India, despite its great diversity and its relative poverty, compares quite favorably with many other long standing democracies, whether they are advanced market or developing polities.

Before discussing public opinion about the quality of India's political system, we should remind the reader of the constitutional basis of Indian federalism. Article 3 provides exceptional power for the center to alter the boundaries of the federal units.¹³ The sixth schedule

¹³ Article 3 of the Indian Constitution, in its entirety, reads: "Parliament may by law – (a) form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State (b) increase the area of any State; (c) diminish the area of any State; (d) alter the boundaries of any State; (e) alter the name of any State: Provided that no Bill for the purpose shall be introduced in either House of Parliament except on the recommendation of the President and unless, where the proposal contained in the Bill affects the area, boundaries or name of any of the States, the Bill has been referred by the President to the Legislature of that State for expressing its views thereon within such period as may be specified in the reference or

simultaneously allows for exceptional autonomy to adapt the federal system to the demands of different groups and for the possibility of asymmetrical federalism. Articles 370 and 371 give special status to Jammu and Kashmir and several states in the north-east, respectively.¹⁴

The Indian federation was not the result of the coming together of pre-existing, highly autonomous, political units. The Indian state under British rule, especially given the center's concept of Paramount Power, existed as an important unitary coercive and regulatory instrument with its famous polity-wide "Steel Frame" civil service.¹⁵ The many different components of the British Empire that retained distinctive institutions such as some of the larger and more developed Princely States were not allowed to join the new state with their own personality at the time of independence. Those Princely States, like Hyderabad and Junagarh that did not agree to accede to the Republic of India were "put together" into the rest of the union by Indian security forces. The independence struggle against the British was carried by a powerful nationalist movement under the leadership of the Congress Party led by Gandhi and Nehru, committed to

within such further period as the President may allow and the period so specified or allowed has expired.

Explanation I: In this article, in clauses (a) to (e), 'State' includes a Union territory, but in the proviso, 'State' does not include a Union territory. Explanation II: The power conferred on Parliament by clause (a) includes the power to form a new State or Union territory by uniting a part of any other State or Union territory to any other State or Union territory."

¹⁴ For example, in a January 2003 interview with Pu Zoramthanga, who was formerly the number two leader of the Mizo National Front fighting for the independence of Mizoram and who is now the democratically-elected chief minister of that state, Zoramthanga told Alfred Stepan that Article 371g of the Constitution gave crucial protections to certain cultural prerogatives of the Mizo's. These protections allowed the insurrection to come to an end and for the Mizo's to enter into Indian political life. Article 371g explicitly states that "no Act of [the Indian] Parliament in respect of (i) religious or social practices of the Mizos, (ii) Mizoram customary law and procedure, (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizoram customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of the State of Mizoram by a resolution so decides."

¹⁵ In their book in progress *Federalism, Democracy and Nation*, Linz and Stepan hope to explore why India did not follow the path to federalism that Germany did in 1870 when both were shaped by a national movement and there were pre-existing political structures. In the German case these pre-existing political structures became part of the federal structure but in India many of them, especially the Princely States, were subsumed in the new independent state. The question we will explore is why in the process of independence India, unlike Germany, did not build on those structures.

democracy, parliamentarism and some form of federalism.¹⁶ It was evident to them that to hold together such a complex and large society, and to govern a subcontinent, a federal form of government was necessary; however, after the experience of partition, the originally-weak unitary voices got stronger, and the emphasis shifted to ensuring a strong center.

The original legitimacy of the republic was thus based on the notion that nationalism and “unitarizing” principles and institutions are central and differentiate India from other federal states. Nonetheless, in the course of fifty years, federalism has become particularly important in the effort to hold together the territories and people of India, with the transformation of many of the boundaries of British India into newly configured linguistic states in the 1950s and the subsequent carving out of new states from Assam, some of which were earlier covered by the Sixth Schedule, which gave them significant autonomy. The formation of new states was a further step in granting autonomy to tribal communities. The much-delayed creation of a Punjabi state on linguistic basis has ultimately served the process of holding together India. Article 3 of the constitution, which has no close parallels in other federal states, has also served that purpose rather well despite the many difficulties and tensions connected with the creation of new states.

Although the number of democratic federal states in the world is small they are very diverse but nonetheless, as we just noted, they fit to a large extent into distinct types. The United States and India are certainly among the most distinct. In fact, they almost represent polar opposites and it would be a great mistake to think that the United States is the model of a federal state and therefore should serve as the basis of any reform of Indian federalism.

Let us look at cultural and political identities in India. For most Indian citizens, India is a nation and therefore they see the Indian Republic as a nation-state, though there are divergent

¹⁶ Especially the strong emergency provisions in the Constitution, such as “President’s rule” where the center could temporarily assume direct rule if, in the judgment of the center appointed Governor and the President of the country, constitutional order was threatened.

visions of that nationhood, some which would exclude from the nation people that feel they are Indian without having to share an exclusivist conception of the nation.¹⁷ There are many people who feel other identities, sometimes equally strong, sometimes somewhat stronger than the Indian national identity. It is not easy to define the number of those who feel an Indian identity, and even less easy to define those who have different conceptions of the Indian nation with the data available to us. It is more difficult than in the case of Spain since the matter of language, so important in that case, is less hegemonic and defining in India. The linguistic states recognize and allow for a certain identification with a distinctive language and culture, and we quickly see that many Indians have a dual identity, that of being Indian and that of belonging to their state. We discover that some of them feel an identity with their state which may be a linguistic cultural identification, without explicitly seeing themselves as Indian. It is not easy to say if that identity is similar to that of a national identity in multi-national societies. There are certainly citizens of India who do not question the Indian state, but feel very strongly another identity which potentially can serve as a basis for a nationalist sentiment and political movement, as it has been the case with a minority of Sikhs identifying with the project of Khalistan, as an independent Sikh state. There are finally some groups in the Northeast who share very little of the Indian national identity, who feel a distinctive national, or at least tribal, identity, and who at one point or another have even questioned the authority of the Indian state and fought for some independent status but, like Mizoram, have been reintegrated into the Indian state and participate, thanks to federalism, in the Indian political process.¹⁸ For them India is just a state-nation and for

¹⁷ On visions of the nation in India, see Ashotosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Anxiety," in *Daedalus*, Volume 122 (Summer 1993): 227-261.

¹⁸ Yadav has recently coordinated in Mizoram a still unpublished opinion survey with the sample size of 2,000, the results of which indicate a surprisingly high level of integration into India's federal democracy. Stepan also carried out interviews with political leaders in Mizoram in January 2003 and arrived at similar conclusions. We find this interesting and significant because most of the Mizeram population is Christian, very few speak any of the main Indian languages, they were not a part of British India, and due to Innerline restrictions the independence movement

a few of them probably something like a multi-national state from whose authority they cannot escape under normal circumstances. Fortunately for India's federal democracy there are not many such states and most can be found in the periphery in the Northeast. The Nagas (inside Nagaland and in surrounding states such as Manipur) would probably be the prime example as would probably be the Kashmir valley.¹⁹

Federalism and the processing of new member states, the asymmetrical status of different states, and the multi-tier federalism in some of the states, are essential elements of the building of India as a state-nation.

In India, as in other federal democracies, like Spain or Canada, the institutionalization of an asymmetrical federalism creates tension and hostility. Many think that only a constitutionally symmetrical federalism, like the one we find in the United States, Australia, Switzerland and Germany, is the ideal form of federalism. However, we want to argue, again, that a comparison of Indian institutions with those of the United States, or for that matter Germany, is not the most fruitful approach. Once we enlarge our scope of analysis, we will see that many of the problems that scholars working on India see as unique and threatening may be found in one way or another in other federal multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and/or multi-national societies in which there is no shared conception of the nation or a nation-state. At the same time, the comparison will show that India and its democratic institutions enjoy a legitimacy among the citizens equal to, if not greater than, the institutions in other long standing democratic federal pluralistic societies. It

had a very weak presence. Finally of course, the Mizos waged a long and bloody, and ultimately an unsuccessful armed struggle for independence from India.

¹⁹ There is of course an important external dimension to the politics of Kashmir. However, Yogendra Yadav has recently coordinated a large survey in Kashmir with a sample of around 2,000. The results are just being analyzed but Yadav is convinced that a majority of the Kashmiris (those who live in the Kashmir valley, which itself is a little over half of the state of Jammu and Kashmir) would not prefer to join Pakistan or to stay in India but would prefer their own independent nation-state. The situation has not doubt improved in the last few months of 2002 given reasonably free and fair elections in the state and the demise of the government seen as being imposed by New Delhi.

should be noted that in no political system do all the citizens grant to the state, its institutions and democratic processes, a unanimous legitimacy or allegiance. It is only the size of India and the number of its people, that makes these problems somewhat more significant than in some other countries, once we translate the proportions into absolute numbers of citizens.

Some Indicators Characterizing the Indian Polity as a State Nation: Pride in India and Multiple but Complementary Identities

After this broad comparative introduction we can turn to some of the relevant data in the hope that they will contribute to stimulate Indian and foreign scholars to further research using broader and even better sets of indicators than the ones we now have.

One important indicator of identification of a citizen with the society and the state is the sense of pride, in this case the pride of being Indian. Fortunately, a similar question has been asked in the federal democracies we are comparing and is continuously asked in the member states of the European Union by the Eurobarometer surveys.

The pride question has been asked in the prestigious and widely used comparative public opinion survey *World Values and European Values* under the direction of Ronald Inglehart et al., based at the University of Michigan. To date there are three rounds of these surveys available for our comparative analysis, 1981-1984, 1990-1993, and 1995-1997. The full results of the 1999 - 2001 round will not be available until 2004. The first round covered 22 independent countries, the second 42, the third 53, and the fourth 75. India has been included in all four rounds. This set of surveys is particularly interesting for comparativists, because each country asks most of the same questions and many of the questions have been used in all the rounds.

A sense of pride can be based on many different things, from political institutions, cultural and the artistic heritage, the landscape, and last but not least, cuisine. Indians, more than people in many countries of the world, have reasons to be proud of many aspects of Indian society, culture and history, while the more recent history of some other countries makes it more difficult for its citizens to feel fully proud of their nation, as is the case of Germany, where the Nazi period and the holocaust legacy represent a heavy burden.²⁰ Those who feel an exclusive identity with another nation and reject the state in which they live are not likely to feel proud of the state or the nation and its heritage. Some of the variations between countries reflect these different attitudes.

When asked "How proud are you to be an Indian?" (69.6%) say "a great deal". Only in the United States the number was larger (78.5%) but the percentage was virtually the same as in Australia as in India, less in Brazil (64.1%) in Argentina (55.8%) lower still in Spain (45%) much lower yet in Germany (11.1%) and surprisingly low in Switzerland (26.3%).²¹ Those saying "not very" or "not at all" add up to 8.3% in India, certainly more than the United States (1.8%) and Australia (2.5), but less than in the other federal democracies, particularly Germany (31.6), and surprisingly again, Switzerland. Perhaps these figures would be different with a more representative sample of the Indian population than the World Value Study, 1995-1997, but they are certainly impressive (see table #5).

²⁰ On the complex issue of pride (or lack thereof) in the German nation, see Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. "Nationalgefühl und Glück," in Noelle-Neumann and Renate Köcher, *Die verletzte Nation* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1987), 17-74.

²¹ Concerning Switzerland, as the reader will see later (in table 20), consistent with our idea of state-nation, of the eleven long-standing federal democracies, Switzerland has the highest percentage of people with confidence in the government and the second highest percentage of people with confidence in the legal system. So while they may not have pride in being Swiss *as such*, they nevertheless have great pride in their Swiss institutions.

Table #5: “How proud are you to be (nationality)?” Responses in the 11 longstanding federal democracies (percent).

	<i>Great Deal</i>	<i>Quite</i>	<i>Not Very</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Total</i>
USA	77.3	19.8	01.5	00.3	01.0	100
Australia	70.3	23.0	02.1	00.4	00.1	100
India	69.6	18.1	07.1	01.2	04.0	100
Brazil	64.1	19.1	14.3	01.9	00.3	100
Spain	63.8	26.2	04.5	03.1	00.5	100
Canada	60.6	33.8	04.0	01.5	00.0	100
Argentina	55.3	28.9	08.3	02.6	04.8	100
Austria	53.0	39.9	05.7	01.4	00.0	100
Belgium	29.0	52.3	12.5	06.1	00.0	100
Swiss	23.5	46.7	15.9	07.2	06.7	100
Germany	11.1	35.8	21.5	13.7	17.9	100

Source: The data for all countries but Austria, Belgium and Canada is from *World Values Study: 1995-1997*, Ronald Inglehart et al., Inter University Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan, question 205. The data for Germany is from the Lander of the former West Germany. Canada, Belgium and Austria were not included in the 1995-97 survey. The data for them is from *WVS: 1990-93*.

Fortunately, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in Delhi has conducted a series of nation-wide surveys that help us address some of the above questions with a larger and more representative sample. The National Election Study (NES) series of the CSDS gives due representation to the various regions, religions, languages and caste-communities of India. The first survey in this series was carried out in 1971 with a sample size of about 4000. In recent years the series was revived through post-poll surveys following the national elections in 1996, 1998 and 1999 with a sample size around 9,000 in each wave. The sample size of the Indian National Election Study compares very favorable with the sample size of the Human Values Study, which in the third round was 2040 or the US National Election Studies supervised by the University of Michigan which normally have less than 2000 respondents. A further advantage of India's National Election Study is that the sample profile of these national surveys

matches the Census profile very closely. The surveys were conducted through face to face interviews using 15 of the 18 official languages mentioned in the Indian Constitution. We will use these surveys extensively in this article.

With the available data it is difficult to separate the Indian identity from other identities that might be in conflict with it and to locate the dual or multiple identities of Indians in a way that would be comparable to some of the data we have for national societies, particularly with articulated national identities. The question that allows us to approach this problem asked about feeling identified as “an Indian”, as “an Indian and of their state”, “only of the state” and “other” answers. In the whole large sample, 49.8% say Indian, another 16.1% Indian and state and 19.9% only state, with 3% giving other answers and 11.1% unable to answer or do not know. At least 65.9% of the total and 74.1% of those answering express an Indian identity, a figure extremely close to the 78.5% of those answering in Spain who express a Spanish identity but still significantly lower than the 95% of those answering in Belgium who express a Belgian identity.

What is particularly significant is that the proportion saying "Indian" is higher among Moslems (58.7%) which, added with those saying "Indian and state" (14.3%), represents 73.3% of the Moslems. This is more than among the Hindus, where a somewhat larger number identified only with their state (20.1%) compared to 11.8% among the Moslems.

Among the Christian minority, the number saying Indian is somewhat lower (37.2%) which combined with those saying Indian and state (18.6%) adds up to (55.8%) with a significant number saying only the state (34.4%).²² Among the Sikks the number of those not answering is particularly small and those opting to say only the state relatively large, 34.4%, with

²² In the case of the Christians, control for where they live, particularly in the Northeast would be useful. It may be not that they feel Christian instead of Indian, but rather, that they feel that they are, say, Nagas instead of Indian. The historical explanation being that they were in areas that are non-Hindi speaking, never were Hindu, and had a separate geographical and legal position within the British Empire (inner line) which made it extremely difficult for the nationalizing impact of the independence movement to be felt.

more than in any other religious group saying Indian and state, 34.3%, with a smaller number, 28.9%, saying just Indian. The answers are more similar to those we find about identities in multi-national societies but even so the number with an Indian and a dual Indian and state identity is very large, 60.2% (see table #6).

Table #6: *Subjective National Identity and Religion in India.*

	<i>Only Indian</i>	<i>Indian and State</i>	<i>Only State</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Don't Know/ Can't Say</i>	
Total	49.8	16.1	19.9	03.0	11.1	(8133)
Hindu	49.5	16.0	20.1	02.9	11.4	(6749)
Muslim	58.7	14.3	11.8	04.6	10.6	(895)
Christian	37.2	18.6	34.4	00.4	09.5	(285)
Sikh	28.9	31.3	34.4	04.7	00.8	(128)
Others	61.8	13.2	19.7	00.0	05.3	(76)

Source: *Indian National Election Study 1998.*

Even so, it is important to emphasize that the percentages of people who identify only with their state and/or with other identities do not differ very much across religious groups. To be exact, while 22.9% of Hindus claim to identify only with their state or with some other identity, the proportion of Muslims who do so actually falls, to 16.4%; and though the percentages do rise for Christians and Sikhs – to 34.8% and 39.1%, respectively – the increases are far from dramatic.

An exclusively Hindu identity of the nation is likely to weaken the Indian identity now clearly expressed by many Muslims (who constitute eleven percent of the population of India). Something similar could happen in the case of Spain if the Spanish identity were defined as incompatible with other identities and excluded those speaking other languages than Spanish.

There are significant and interesting differences between the states of the federation in the answers to the question about Indian, Indian and state and only state identity. It is not surprising that the Indian identity is dominant in Delhi, 84%, and that the “only state” identity is high in the Northeastern state of Meghalaya, and two of the Southern states Tamil Nadu and Karnataka which have a strong regional and linguistic identity (see table #7).

Table #7: *Subjective National Identity in India by States.*

	Only Indian	Indian and State	Only State	Others	Don't Know/ Can't Say	
Total	49.8	16.1	19.9	03.0	11.1	(8133)
Andhra Pradesh	43.5	17.1	07.4	00.2	31.8	(556)
Assam	42.6	14.0	13.2	28.7	01.5	(265)
Bihar	41.1	24.6	13.8	00.1	20.4	(833)
Gujarat	39.7	30.3	24.6	00.3	05.1	(390)
Haryana	56.4	07.4	22.8	02.0	11.4	(749)
Karnataka	30.2	10.4	55.7	00.4	03.3	(540)
Kerala	45.7	13.9	31.0	02.2	07.3	(368)
Madhya Pradesh	53.2	07.0	15.4	05.7	18.8	(560)
Maharashtra	58.6	15.9	12.7	01.5	11.3	(905)
Meghalaya	43.6	10.3	43.6	00.0	02.6	(39)
Orissa	59.0	18.9	17.6	00.3	04.2	(307)
Pondicherry	35.5	32.3	00.0	00.0	32.3	(31)
Punjab	27.5	32.0	31.6	07.7	01.2	(247)
Rajasthan	44.5	20.6	21.9	05.0	07.9	(456)
Tamil Nadu	39.3	08.1	45.2	00.5	06.9	(595)
Tripura	37.7	11.3	18.9	24.5	07.5	(53)
Uttar Pradesh	75.4	09.8	03.5	02.3	09.0	(1082)
West Bengal	44.2	25.1	19.8	02.1	08.8	(570)

Source: *Indian National Election Study 1998.*

An Excursus on Political Identities and Functioning Federalism in the Punjab

For our purposes, the case of the Punjab is particularly interesting. In that conflictual state relatively few choose the “only Indian” alternative, 27.5%, but a significant number chose a state and Indian identity, 32%. That means a majority chose an Indian identity, compared to 31.6% with only a state identity (with 7.7% giving other answers). Among the Punjabis we can distinguish the Hindu minority and the Sikh majority. The Hindus identify more as Indian, 35.8%, than the Sikhs, 18.9%, and less as Indian and state, 29.2% compared to 34.7% among the Sikhs. However, the Punjabi Hindus also identify to a significant extent as only Punjabis, 34.4%, although somewhat less than the Sikhs, 40.0%.

The complexity of the multiple and sometimes conflictual identities *within* the Punjab itself makes this region of India more comparable to the Spanish case than to either the Belgian or Canadian ones. This is because what distinguishes the Spanish case from its Belgian and Canadian counterparts is the high level of linguistic and national heterogeneity in the peripheral regions with the most developed sense of a distinct national consciousness themselves, namely the Basque Country and Catalonia. As such, not only is Spain as a whole more or less multi-national, but so too are the Basque Country and Catalonia. By contrast, in Belgium, both the regions of Flanders and Wallonia are overwhelmingly monolingual and homogenous (of course, the great exception there is the city of Brussels); and in Quebec, there is a considerable degree of linguistic homogeneity outside of the metropolitan region of Montreal.

Though the diversity in the Punjab is based in the first instance on a religious rather than a linguistic cleavage (as is largely the case in Spain, Belgium, and Canada), the comparison with Spain is nevertheless useful because of the similar type of problem that can be expected to arise

in both places. To put the problem simply, the fact that Catalonia, the Basque Country, and the Punjab are themselves more or less multi-national makes it all the more difficult to accommodate even the cultural aspirations of nationalists in these territories without infringing upon the rights of important minorities there.

In the case of the Punjab, it would naturally be a mistake to infer that those 40% of Sikhs who identify only with their state are supporters of a nationalist or a pro-independence position. Only a more detailed analysis, and a different type of question, would allow us to identify the Punjabi Sikhs that support Khalistan. Fortunately, we have the results of a series of questions that will be useful for this task, but first we must put the survey questions in their overall political context.

In the 1980's a violent secessionist struggle led by a minority of Sikh militants occurred in the Punjab. The Punjab conflict was to a large extent precipitated by the Center deposing, largely for narrow political purposes, the Sikh-led Akali Dal Party from control of the Punjab. The conflict was greatly aggravated by the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh body-guards in retaliation for her authorization of the use of tanks against the Golden Temple, a sacred Temple of the Sikhs, where some of the most violent Sikh militants were based. The conflict increased greatly in intensity when the Central government stood by in Delhi while many Sikhs were butchered in riots in the aftermath of the assassination. Some analysts worried that Sikhs would not really be supportive of Indian democracy again. In addition to the butchering of the Sikhs, what alienated them further was that virtually no legal action was taken against the guilty. It was only in 2002 that the Congress Party officially expressed regrets about what happened. However, after boycotting elections in 1992, Sikhs and the Akal Dal participated in elections in 1998. In fact the Akali Dal joined an alliance with the Hindu BJP

which helped the Akali Dal win control of the Punjab State Assembly, as a result the Akali Dal became part of the twenty-one party coalition led by the BJP that formed the government at the center. By successful participation in the fruits of Indian federal politics at the State and at the Center the Akali Dal was clearly by the early 1990s what Stepan in his chapter in this volume calls a “centric–regional party”, as opposed to a regional, potentially separatist party.

By 1998, attitudes in support of democracy in the Punjab were slightly above the Indian average. There have been two large electoral polls in the Punjab that give us further insight into what other set of attitudes of Punjabi Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus might help contribute to, or at least reinforce, the Punjabi attitudes supportive of Indian unity and democracy. In the 1998 Indian NES “post-poll study”, more respondents in Punjab than in any other state said that life and property were safer now than five years ago.

How should we interpret such a finding? Certainly part of the defeat of the Khalistan independence movement in the Punjab was due to India’s useable state coercive apparatus. As we have argued, for most would-be separatists in India, in sharp contrast to the situation in the former USSR or Yugoslavia, the loyalty of the security forces to the central state and the “state-nation” is a given, as is the fact that force will be met with greater force. Geo-politically there is no exit. This raises a very important question. The insurgents may have been defeated, and the Punjab may in fact be more safe for the average citizen, but at what cost to the legitimacy of the Indian state?

In the case of the Punjab, do Sikhs believe that the methods used by the armed separatists were legitimate, and that the tactics used by the Indian state, especially the Punjab police, were illegitimate? If so, even if respondents say they feel safer now than in the recent past, there could still be a serious problem of political identities in the Punjab for India. The base

for an insurgency, or at least a series of disloyal violent activities that may weaken democracy in the future might still be there.

Fortunately we can begin to answer these questions due to an unusually large Exit Poll Analysis (n = 4950) at the Punjab State Assembly Elections of 1998. In answer to the question “do you believe that the means used by the Kharku (a word coined by the Khalistan activists to describe themselves) to fulfill their objectives were justified or not? , only 5.4 % of the Sikhs (in whose name independence was being fought for) answered “ justified”, 20.7% said “partly justified”, and 65.7% of the Sikhs said “not justified”. Concerning the appropriateness of the (often quite violent) methods of the Punjab Police to counter the Kharku , 26.8% of the Sikhs said that the methods used by the police were “justified”, and 33.1% said “somewhat justified” (see table #8).

Table 8: *Attitudes Towards Methods Used by the Separatist Sikhs and by the Punjab Police during the Khalistan Conflict (Percentage of Sikhs and Hindu Responses)*

Responses	Opinion about the Methods of the Pro Khalistan Sikhs		Opinion about Punjab Police Methods to Repress Khalistan Militants	
	Sikh	Hindu	Sikh	Hindu
"Justified"	5.4	3.9	26.8	40.7
"Somewhat Justified"	20.7	11.6	33.1	36.2
"Not Justified"	65.7	77.3	30.0	13.5
"Can't Say / D.K."	8.2	7.2	10.1	9.6
N=	3,138	1,628	3,138	1,628

Source: NES India, Exit Poll Analysis of Punjab State Elections, 4/6/98.

Four years after the poll referred to in Table 8, a similar battery of questions were asked after the Punjab State Assembly elections of 2002. The same pattern of responses was repeated--

except for an even stronger rejection of the methods used by the pro-Khalistan militants.

Political, as opposed to ethnic issues, so dominated the 2002 elections that the Congress Party, which many thought would never hold office again in the Punjab, won control of the Punjab State Assembly and the Congress party leader in the Punjab became Chief Minister of the state.

National and International Support for “No-Exit” from India.

Federalism is a complex form of government and consequently generates many problems. Federalism in a multi-lingual, multi-national, multi-cultural, multi-religious society generates even more problems, though democracies of the above characteristics, when the different groups have a clear territorial basis, probably cannot be governed democratically without federalism. We are not going to recount the long history of Indian federalism where, in the beginning, some of the founding fathers were quite skeptical about federalism, would have for many reasons preferred a more unified state, but were also aware that this was an impossibility and with more or less reluctance accepted federalism and eventually the particular form of linguistic states. Statesmen in societies with significant multinational components, where different groups may attain a sense of national identity and where those groups may be mobilized by nationalist parties, have been and are suspicious of federalism. They are aware of the potential threat posed by the invocation of the right of self-determination, an invocation that often presents problems to many states given the ambiguity and the difficulties of implementing such an invocation. The Indian government has been very conscious of this and at the time of agreeing to the UN Human Rights Covenant declared:

With reference to Article 1 of the Covenants the government of the Republic of India declares that the words the right of self-determination appearing in this

article apply only to the peoples under foreign domination and that these words do not apply to sovereign independent states or to a section of the people or a nation which is the essence of national integrity.²³

Such a declaration serves the purpose of attempting to exclude international support for such claims, but they cannot prevent them. The relationship between federalism and such claims is complex. On the one hand it satisfies to some extent the demand for self-government in a state-nation by not attempting to impose a single national identity on the entire quite pluralistic polity. It can, however, also make it possible for state governments in the federation to use their power and resources in a process of nation-building against the center. This is not the place to discuss the comparative evidence from other multi-national, multi-lingual federations but to note some of the distinctive factors in the Indian case.

Foremost, the Indian constitution in its Article 3 offers a flexibility that allows the central government to respond to some of those demands within the complex federal system. It also allows for considerable asymmetry in the federal states. For example, in some of the states of the northeast a multi-tiered federal system has emerged. For a long time the party system played an important role in integrating people in different parts of the country into the state.

In most of India, the struggle for independence and the democratic institutions created at that time legitimated a sense of Indian nationhood and a conception of the nation open to its pluralism. This makes it unlikely that major political forces, parties, and intellectuals would favor whatever secessionist demands may appear in the periphery (with perhaps the exception of Kashmir). This consensus on the importance of the Indian nation, and on the Indian state-nation, give support to the institutional rules in the constitution that allow the government to act in defense of the Indian Republic. As in many other federal constitutions, there are provisions to defend the constitution and the unity of the state, if necessary by coercive means. The awareness

²³ Still have to find reference.

of that possibility, and the actual record of using those resources, has left those who might question the state in a “no-exit” position, one that indirectly favors the search for negotiated compromise within the context of the federal institution of the state.

India, due to its long standing democracy, its significant atomic capability and large mobile ground forces, and its geo-political location in the world, is not very vulnerable to international opinion when confronting secessionist threats. On the one side, its problems are too far from world attention, and on the other it is more difficult for its neighbors to interfere, though in the case of the northeast such interference by China was present, and of course by Pakistan in Kashmir. Also, several of the states where secessionist tendencies might have been strong, or might arise, are too marginal and poor to sustain aspirations to independent statehood without external support. This again is not the case in some other federal multi-national states, like Spain, or the case of Quebec in Canada.

The fact that India has a strong state with legitimate democratic institutions, a functioning legal system, and loyal armed forces, makes it very different from other federal states in the developing world. Geography is also a favorable factor since there is a continuity of territory that, for example, that does not exist in an island state like Indonesia. With all its problems, we feel that Indian federalism, managed intelligently and democratically, can assure the unity of the Republic.

Indian Political Institutions and Caste and Socioeconomic Groups

One would not expect caste or social and economic position to relate as much to national identity as would religion or some linguistic communities. It is noteworthy that, except for a

greater proportion who do not know or cannot say among the underprivileged groups, the proportion of those identifying only with their state is lower among the upper caste members, 14.9%, larger among the OBC'S, 21.1%, and the scheduled caste, 24.8%, and fairly large among Scheduled Tribe (ST) members.

The proportion answering “Indian and state” is relatively similar, 19.8%, 14.5%, 15.5%, 13.6%, with the difference reflected mainly in those answering “Indian”, which range from 56.7% among the upper caste, 48.3% among the OBC's, 45.6% among Scheduled Castes(SC), and a low of 36.1% among the ST (Scheduled Tribe). Clearly, the national integration of these different sectors of the society is significantly different. However, we would have to take into account the religious identity of the members of scheduled tribes, which may explain their attitudes (see table #9).

Table #9: *Subjective National Identity in India by caste.*

	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Castes	OBC	Upper caste	Total
Only Indian	36.1	45.6	48.1	56.7	43.4
Indian and State	13.6	15.5	14.5	19.8	21.7
Only State	26.7	24.8	21.1	14.9	30.9
Others	03.7	03.2	03.5	01.7	00.7
Don't Know/ Can't Say	20.0	10.8	12.8	06.9	03.3
	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(671)	(1325)	(2946)	(2039)	(8133)

Source: *Indian National Elections Study*, 1998.

The differences according to economic position are congruent with the data. Again, it is natural that the proportion who answer "do not know" or "cannot say" should be larger among the very poor, 14.8%, and smallest among the upper socio-economic strata, 3.6%. However, the differences in the proportion saying "only state" are in the same direction, largest among the very

poor, 27.8%, and significantly smaller among the upper strata, while those saying Indian and state are in the same direction but not so markedly, ranging from 13.7% among the very poor and 19.1% among the upper socio-economic strata. The overall pattern is clearly reflected in those identifying as only Indian, 39.9% among the very poor, 49.6% among the poor, 55.4% among the middle class and 61.9% among the upper class. It should be kept in mind that the data by socio-economic position does not distinguish Hindus from Moslems, Christian and other, but it is evident that those who are socially privileged feel their national identity more distinctively (see table #10).

Tables #10: *Subjective National Identity in India by economic categories.*

	Very Poor	Poor	Middle	Upper	Total
Only Indian	39.9	49.6	55.4	61.9	49.8
Indian and State	13.7	15.9	17.0	19.1	16.0
Only State	27.8	18.4	17.2	13.3	20.2
Others	03.8	03.3	02.0	02.0	03.0
Don't Know/ Can't Say	14.8	12.8	08.4	03.6	11.1
	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(2187)	(2368)	(1909)	(959)	(7423)

Source: *Indian National Elections Study*, 1998.

Other data that show how the degree of national identification affects all political attitudes is that a large percentage of those who cannot answer the question of identity, are also unable to answer the question about whether democracy is the preferable type of political system. The clear preference for democracy, compared to the authoritarian alternative, or thinking that it makes no difference, is largest among those who also identify themselves as Indian, 72.8%, compared to 6.3% opting for authoritarianism under some circumstances or those seeing no difference, 4.8%. Among those saying Indian and state the proportions respectively are 63.0%, 7.7%, 10.3%. Among those who see themselves only as members of a particular

state, the commitment to democracy is appreciably weaker, 55.5%. But the difference is not in a greater preference for authoritarianism or indifference about the forms of government, respectively 5.6% and 7.6%, but in the much larger number who have no opinion, 34.1%, compared to the 16.1% giving the answer identifying only as Indian (see table #11).

Table #11: *Preference for Democracy by Subjective National Identity.*

	<i>Only Indian</i>	<i>Indian and State</i>	<i>Only State</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
Democracy is preferable	72.8	63.0	55.0	44.9	60.3
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	06.3	07.7	05.6	03.6	05.8
No difference	04.8	10.3	07.6	16.6	06.4
Don't Know/ Can't Say	16.1	19.0	31.4	34.8	27.5
	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(4058)	(1313)	(1620)	(247)	(8133)

Source: *Indian National Elections Study*, 1998.

This data by class status and class position and on the attitude towards democracy suggests that a full identification with the nation is an indicator of a broader social integration. It also suggests that the national identity question taps a significant dimension of the political culture in India.

Democratic State - Nations: Who Supports Democracy in India?

We would like to argue that democracy and democratic political institutions and processes are an essential component of the viability and stability of multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-national state-nations. Democracy makes possible the identification with the state of many of its citizens who might have different identities, who might question their nation-state, but are ready to be loyal citizens of the state. Authoritarianism might serve to impose a nation-state

model on the society, as was the case of Spain under the authoritarian regime of Franco. But, as the data for Spain show, the result ultimately was a backlash of resurgence and, in the Basque country, violent extreme nationalism.

Democracy, and more concretely federal democracy, can serve to integrate such a society. The *Verfassungspatriotismus* (“constitutional patriotism”) of Dolf Sternberger, developed by Jürgen Habermas in the German Federal Republic, might not have been important in Germany after the unification of the BRD and the DDR, but it certainly is an important component for more heterogeneous societies. Let us note that we would not argue that it is the only component of support for a state-nation but certainly one of the most important ones. It is for that reason that a more detailed discussion of the attitude of Indians and of different groups in Indian society toward democracy and democratic institutions is so important and interesting.

In analyzing the attitudes of citizens toward the democratic institutions, there are some serious problems with the indicators used. It is important to distinguish the attitude towards the need for certain institutions, beginning with democracy, compared to authoritarian alternatives and ending with the attitudes toward political parties. There is sufficient evidence from many countries that we need to distinguish the belief in the need for certain institutions and their desirability and legitimacy, from the attitudes about the way those institutions actually perform. People in principle might support democracy, but they may often have serious misgivings about how their particular democracy is actually functioning. A distinction between the “legitimacy of institutions” and the “efficacy of institutions” is therefore crucial.²⁴ Citizens may believe that democracy is the best form of government for a country like theirs, but when asked if democracy is able to solve the problems of their society, might be less enthusiastic. When that question is

²⁴ This is a theme developed in Juan Linz, “Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration,” in Linz and Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

followed by, “How is democracy working in our country?,” in many circumstances the answers might be quite negative. The negative response to the actual performance of democratic institutions in the long run is likely to erode the belief in the need for those institutions, but there is also evidence from many studies that these are different dimensions. The same is true, even more so, with political parties. In many democratic countries people agree on the need for parties to articulate their interests and demands but, at the same time, a large number of people have little trust in actual political parties. There are many and complex reasons for this distrust in practically all democracies, a distrust which is not translated into rejection of political parties in principle as necessary institutions in a democracy, and even less of democracy itself.²⁵ The same is true to an even greater extent in attitudes towards the incumbents of many offices in democratic systems. The use of one or another indicator may capture different dimensions and sometimes leads to pessimistic perceptions about the stability of democracy.

The question that has been asked in many countries is, “With which of the following phrases are you most in agreement?,” “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government?,” “In some circumstances an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic government,” “For someone like me a democratic or non-democratic regime makes no difference,” in addition in allowing for no answers and “do not know.” The “do not know” response is more likely among poor and uneducated segments of the population and therefore it should not be surprising that in a national survey of India it should be 27.5%, the largest amount ever recorded in the list of countries where this question has been asked.

When we turn to the first alternative, the agreement with democracy varies considerably, between countries, though nowhere is it unanimous. In India it is 60.3% of all those interviewed,

²⁵ For an elaboration on this theme, see Juan Linz, “Parties in Contemporary Democracies: Problems and Paradoxes,” in Richard Gunther, José Ramón Montero, and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Political Parties. Old Concepts and New Challenges* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 291-317.

which means that 83.2% of those expressing an opinion agree that democracy is preferable. The second alternative, that in some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable, is the choice of 5.8% of the population and 8% of those who actually expressed an opinion. Those who say for someone like themselves a democratic or non-democratic regime makes no difference are 6.4% of the population, and 8.8% of those with an opinion.

Let us look at the answers in a few other countries. In Brazil, the number with no opinion is 14.6%, a large one in comparison to other democracies, but those clearly preferring democracy are only 41.0%, those expressing the potential support for an authoritarian alternative, 21.1% and those indifferent 23.3%, a much less favorable response than we find in India. If we turn to a relatively new democracy, Spain, the number of no answers is quite small, 6%, and those preferring democracy 78%, those potentially supporting an authoritarian alternative 9%, and those indifferent 7%, figures that are very similar to those we find in India. The Spanish data have been consistently within this range over a long period of time and are very similar to those we find in the other Southern European democracies. In Latin America only Uruguay, with 80% democratic, 8% authoritarian and 6% indifferent is similar. Even in Chile after the painful experience of authoritarianism, democracy is endorsed by only 52.2%, 18.5% do not exclude the authoritarian alternative and 25.3% are indifferent, though the number of those without opinion is only 3.9%. In summary, in an international comparative perspective the support for democracy in India is very high (see table #12).

Table #12: *Attitudes toward democracy and authoritarianism in six post-1975 cases of redemocratization: Uruguay, Spain, India, Korea, Brazil and Chile (in percentages). The number in parenthesis shows the attitude of those who answered the question.*

Questions	Country					
	Uruguay	Spain	India	Korea	Chile	Brazil
With which of the following phrases are you most in agreement?						
Democracy is preferable to any other form of government	80 (85)	78 (83)	60 (83)	53 (48)	52 (54)	41 (48)
In some circumstances an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic government.	08	09	06		18	21
For someone like me, a democratic or a nondemocratic regime makes no difference	06	07	06		25	23
Don't know/ No answer	06	06	27		04	15
N	(1213)		(8133)		(1200)	(1240)

Source: The data for India are from the *National Election Study, 1998*, coordinated by Yogendra Yadav of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Data for Uruguay, Brazil and Chile are from the *Latino Barometer 1996*, directed by Marta Lagos. The Spanish data are from the *Eurobarometer 37* (1992). The Korean data is from the *Korea Democracy Barometer 1999*. In Brazil, for the *2002 Latino Barometer* the "Democracy is preferable to any other form of government" response has dropped from 41% in 1996 to 37%.

We immediately have to ask ourselves whether in the heterogeneous Indian population commitment to democracy is limited to one or another segment of the society. To begin with, the number of "do not know", "no" answers is very similar among Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs, respectively 28%, 27.3% and 26.6%. When we turn to the positive attitude toward democracy, ignoring those with no opinion, we find that 60.0% of the Hindus, 59.2% of the Moslems and 66.4% of the Sikhs agree it is preferable to any other form of government. Among the Christians it is 61.8%, even when the number of those with no opinion is smaller, 18.9%. The authoritarian alternative is chosen by practically the same proportion of Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs, 5.7%, 5.5% and 5.5%, and more of the Christians, 8.1%. The belief that for someone like themselves, a

democratic or non-democratic regime makes no difference, is found in 6.1% of the Hindus, 8.2% of the Moslems, 1.6% of the Sikhs, and 11.2% of the Christians. In summary, whatever deep cleavages and differences might exist along religious communal lines, they are not reflected in the attitudes toward democracy. Democracy can be a key unifying element among all Indians (see table #13).

Table #13: *Opinions about democracy by religious groups.*

	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Christia</i>	<i>Sikh</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>n</i>					
Democracy is preferable	60.1	59.2	61.8	66.4	69.7	60.3
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	05.7	05.5	08.1	05.5	03.9	05.8
No difference	06.1	08.0	11.2	01.6	05.3	06.4
Don't know/ Can't say	28.0	27.3	18.9	26.6	21.1	27.5
	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(6749)	(895)	(285)	(128)	(76)	(8133)

Source: *Indian National Election Study 1998.*

Not unexpectedly, among the very poor the number of those who do not know or have no answer is particularly large. Even so, a majority of them, 54.9%, opt for democracy, and 10.8% opt for a non-democratic alternative. Among the poor the proportions are 57.4% and 11.1%. Among the middle economic segment the percentages are 64.3% and 13.5%. The apparently more democratic answer of the middle level segment is mostly a result of the much smaller number, 22.3%, who have no answer and the largest democratic response among the upper income level, 69.1%, compared to 15.6% authoritarian of the much smaller with no opinion, 15.2%. It is clear that democracy is not the preference of either the more privileged or the more underprivileged among Indians but a shared preference (see table #14).

Table #14: *Opinions about democracy by economic categories.*

	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Total</i>
Democracy is preferable	54.9	57.4	64.3	69.1	60.0
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	10.8	11.1	13.5	15.6	12.2
No difference/ Don't know	34.3	31.4	22.3	15.2	27.8
	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(2187)	(2368)	(1909)	(959)	(7423)

Source: *Indian National Election Study 1998.*

In view of the historic tensions between Tamil Nadu and the Republic in the early years and the more recent conflict in Punjab it is noteworthy that a commitment to democracy is above the Indian average in both states. In Tamil Nadu 79.5% prefer democracy, 6.4% authoritarianism, 2.7% see no difference, and 11.4% have no opinion, with fewer no opinion 3%. In Punjab 64.4% prefer democracy, 4.5% prefer authoritarian alternative and 1.2% see no difference for themselves (see table #15).

Table #15: *Support for democracy in India as a whole and in Tamil Nadu and the Punjab.*

	<i>All of India</i>	<i>Tamil Nadu</i>	<i>Punjab</i>
Democracy is preferable	60.3	79.5	64.4
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	05.8	06.4	04.5
No difference	06.4	02.7	01.2
Don't Know/ No answer	27.5	11.4	30.0
	100	100	100

Source: *National Election Study 1998.*

Note: Of the 11 states where at least 200 people were polled, support for democracy ranked first in Tamil Nadu and third in the Punjab.

It is not easy to compare the attitudes of upper caste Indians, OBC's, SC's and ST communities since the number of those without an opinion varies from 21.3% to 45%. The democratic alternative is chosen by 65.4% of the upper caste, 62.1% of the OBC's, 56.6% of the SC and 40.8% of the ST. But the number of authoritarian preferences varies little from the 13.3% among the upper caste to the 11.6% of the OBC's, 10.6% of the SC's and is only significantly more important among the Scheduled Tribe people, 14.2%, considering the large number with no opinion. A more detailed analysis of these different groups would certainly reveal some differences in the degree of commitment to democracy (see table #16).

Table #16: *Support for democracy by caste.*

	<i>Upper Caste</i>	<i>OBC</i>	<i>Scheduled Caste</i>	<i>Scheduled Tribe</i>
Democracy is preferable	65.4	62.1	56.6	40.8
Sometimes authoritarianism is preferable	13.3	11.6	10.6	14.2
No difference/ Don't know	21.3	26.3	32.9	45.0
(N)	100 (2039)	100 (2946)	100 (1312)	100 (671)

Source: *Indian National Election Study 1998.*

Although we will turn later to the problem of the distrust of different institutions and particularly political parties, it is important to note how much the Indians agree with the need for parties in answering the question, "Suppose there were no parties or assemblies and elections were not held, do you think that the government in this country can be run better?", only 19.8% of the population has no opinion and 68.8% reject a system of government without parties, assemblies and elections and only 11.4% agree with that possibility. These answers are obviously quite consistent with the commitment to democracy we have just noted. Again we

find some interesting differences between states, with a high of 35.0% in Gujarat, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 34.6%. In Tamil Nadu, in spite of the strong commitment to democracy, there are 27.8% that cannot say and 17.8% agreeing with the statement and 54.4% disagree, reflecting a considerable alienation from party politics in that state. A comparison with the Punjab, considering the conflicts in that state, is quite interesting, though 31.8% do not answer the question, 60% disagree and only 8.2% agree with the no party regime. In comparison the alienation from political parties in Gujarat is quite significant, 16.8% compared to 48.2% that in principle support the need for political parties. We see that within the broad consensus on democracy there are significant differences in the response to different institutions (see table #17).

Table #17: *Support for democracy by state.*

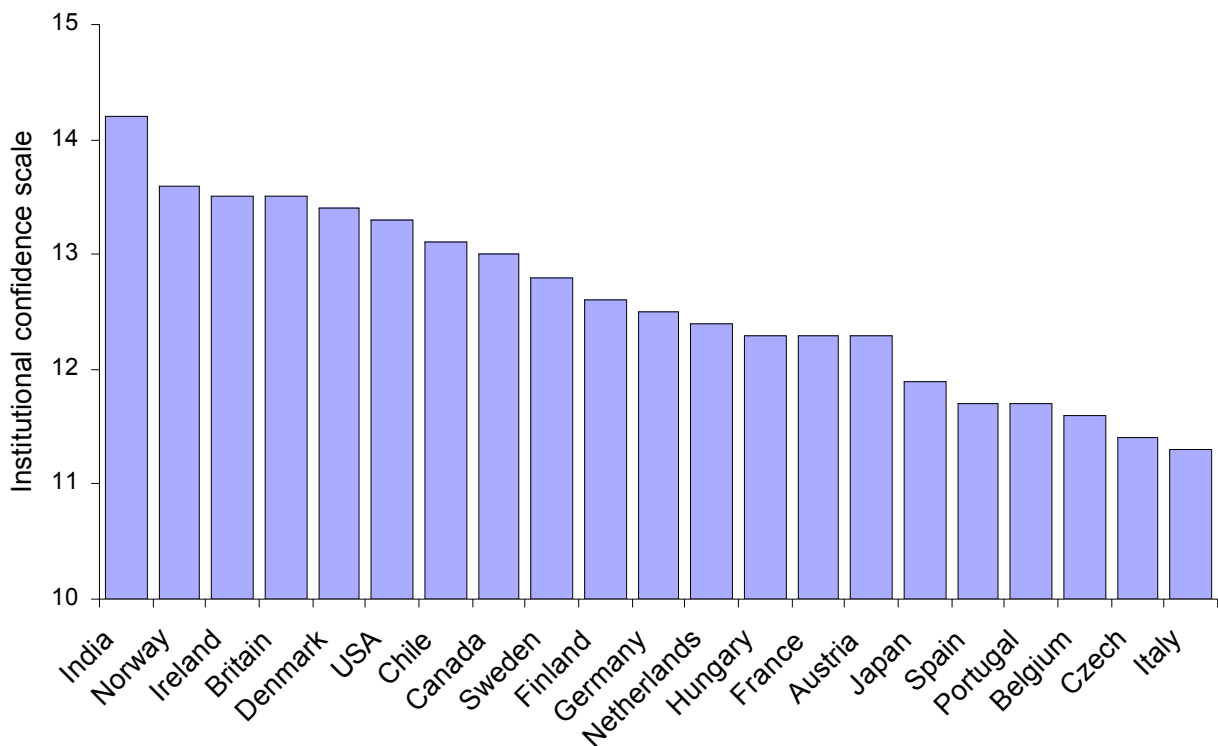
	<i>Democracy is preferable</i>	<i>Sometimes authoritarianis m</i>	<i>No difference</i>	<i>Don't Know/ Can't Say</i>	
Total	60.3	05.8	06.4	27.5	(8133)
Andhra Pradesh	44.2	03.8	03.2	48.7	(556)
Assam	58.9	05.3	18.5	17.4	(265)
Bihar	55.0	01.9	02.6	40.5	(833)
Gujarat	44.9	10.0	19.7	25.4	(390)
Haryana	53.0	06.0	00.7	40.3	(149)
Karnataka	62.6	05.2	02.4	29.8	(540)
Kerala	77.2	09.0	01.9	12.0	(368)
Madhya Pradesh	43.2	02.1	10.2	44.5	(560)
Maharashtra	74.8	08.6	02.5	14.0	(905)
Meghalaya	71.8	15.4	05.1	07.7	(39)
Orissa	64.2	03.9	16.6	15.3	(307)
Pondicherry	54.8	06.5	22.6	16.1	(31)
Punjab	64.4	04.5	01.2	30.0	(247)
Rajasthan	57.7	09.4	08.1	24.8	(456)
Tamil Nadu	79.5	06.4	02.7	11.4	(595)
Tripura	81.1	01.9	11.3	05.7	(53)
Uttar Pradesh	64.8	06.7	06.1	22.5	(1082)
West Bengal	41.4	03.7	09.5	45.4	(570)

Source: *India National Election Study 1998.*

India as a State Nation: Assessing Trust in Institutions

Let us try to go beyond the overall question of support for democracy to trust in the major institutions of the state. The study of trust has been a major research area in policy analysis and social science research for the last twenty years or so. Recently Pippa Norris at Harvard University attempted to bring this research together so as to be able to make comparative judgments about trust in institutions.²⁶ Using the Human Values 1990-1993 round of surveys she constructed a composite index of trust by measuring expressed trust in five major institutions she felt were important for a democratic state: parliament, civil service, the judiciary, police and the military. She did this for 23 democracies, one of which was India (see table #18).

Table 18: *Institutions and Political Trust in India and Twenty Other Democracies: 1990 - 1993*



Source: Pippa Norris, *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance* (Oxford:

²⁶ Pippa Norris, *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Oxford University Press, 1999), figure 11.2, p. 229. Norris constructed this chart by combining the responses in *World Values Surveys: 1990-93* concerning trust for five institutions, parliament, the civil service, the legal system, the police, and the army, p.222.

In order to see if India's very high comparative standing concerning trust in institutions held up in a later survey, we ran the data on trust in institutions for the eleven long-standing federal democracies based on the 1995-1997 round of the Human Values surveys. If we combine the total percentages of respondents who answered that they had a "Great Deal of Trust" or "Quite a Lot of Trust" in an institution, India ranks first or second out of the eleven long standing federal democracies in five of the six categories. No other country scores in the top two more than twice. At the opposite end of the scale Argentina ranks last in four of the six categories (see table #19).