

Federalism, Multi-National States, and Democracy:
A Theoretical Framework, The Indian Model and a Tamil Case Study

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Introduction

In my article in this volume with Juan J. Linz and Yogendra Yadav we stress that for some citizens India is a “Nation State” and for others a “State Nation”. We also noted however that India has a “multinational” dimension. I will devote this article to the development of a theoretical framework for understanding how to construct, or deconstruct, multi-national federal democracies, and to the argument that Indian politics, properly understood, can teach social scientists, and indeed anyone interested in how democracy is crafted in countries with many languages, religions, cultures and even nations, an immense amount both theoretically and politically.

In this article I define a country as having a “robustly politically multi-national” dimension to its polity if it has more than one territorially concentrated linguistic cultural majority, and if some politically significant groups in at least one of these cultural areas spend much of their energies attempting to achieve greater political autonomy, or even independence, for what they argue is their ‘nation’. Following this definition Canada (due to Quebec), Spain (especially due to the Basque Country and Catalonia), and Belgium (due to Flanders), are “robustly politically multinational”.

India, due to the Khasmir Valley alone is “robustly politically multinational”!¹ But at

¹ 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 .

various times Nagaland and Mizoram in the Northeast, the Khalistan movement among some young Sikhs in the Punjab, and the Dravidian movement in the South have also given a multinational dimension to Indian politics.²The United Kingdom due to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland is multinational. However, since the United Kingdom does not now have a relatively large, territorially concentrated area where a majority of the population does not speak the predominant language of the state (as there is in Canada, Spain, Belgium, and India) the United Kingdom is not at this moment in history, given the definition I will use in this chapter, “politically robustly multinational”.

In this chapter I will attempt to analyze how a potential problem of multinationalism with possible secessionist potential in South India, the Dravidian Movement, especially in what is now the state of Tamil Nadu, became a non-problem.³

4% are Hindus). Also a significant armed group has also 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.

² 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:HarperCollins,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).

³ 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.A forthcoming doctoral dissertation by R.Thirunavukkarasu, “Deconstructing Tamil Nationalism: The Context of the Contestation Between Linguistic and Religious (Saivite) Identities in Tamil Society” at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi ,will also be a valuable work on Tamil and Dravidian politics concerning the debate over possible secession from India. I learned much from conversations with Pandian, Ram and Thirunayukkarasu but any errors of fact or emphasis are mine.

As with any potential problem that became a non-problem there is always a question about how severe the problem actually was and this may lead to a failure to examine choices that might have actually facilitated the management of the potential problem. I certainly accept the argument that the desire for secession never became a majority sentiment in South India, even at the height of the Dravidian movement from the 1920s to the 1940s, or even during the 1965 anti-Hindi language riots. I also accept the argument that long after some Dravidian parties had abandoned hope, or even possibly desire for independence, they continued to use the language of separatism as an instrument of voter mobilization inside normal Indian politics.⁴

But I note that even one of the leaders of the interpretive movement that stresses the instrumental uses of separatist rhetoric in the 1950s and 1960s, Narendra Subramanian, acknowledges that the Dravidian movement had separatist dimensions. For example, he states that “ the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu began during the 1910s by raising militant demands for secession and virulently opposed the upper Brahmin caste”.⁵ Elsewhere he writes that “Tamil Nadu was the first Indian state in which secessionist/autonomous impulses developed”.⁶The two great leaders of the Dravidian movement until the 1960s were Ramaswami Naicker (normally simply called Periar) and C.N. Annadurai. Concerning Periar, Subramanian asserts: “Periar called for the creation of a separate country in which the Dravidian–as-Sudra would enjoy

⁴ All of these positions are articulated by Narendra Suramanian in his careful and well documented Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens and Democracy in South India(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), see for example pages 15,125, 131, and 313.

⁵ Ibid, p.7.

⁶ Ibid,p.131.

primacy”.⁷ At the Independence Day of India Periar urged the burning of the Indian flag and non-recognition of the new Indian Constitution. Of C.N. Annadurai, who broke with Periar in 1947 to form a political party, Subramanian comments that Annanadurai, (who also shared Periar’s discourse of Brahmins as alien and harmful North Indians) “argued that the Dravidians were oppressed by the Brahmin, the Bania (a North Indian merchant caste) and the British, and that the departure of one of the oppressors could only be an occasion to rejoice. He wished to continue the struggle for secession, to free Tamil Nadu of the other two oppressors”⁸. If one accepts all of these quotes as accurate, the question that we must ask is: why did these articulations of separatist desires become a non- issue by the early 1970s? We particularly need to examine how politically strategic decisions and choices can aggravate, or ameliorate,potential multinational tensions . For example, in de facto multinational Sri Lanka, Sinhalese politicians eliminated English as a link language for government posts, downgraded the language of the largest minority, the Tamils, insisted on maintaining a unitary state, and elevated Buddhism to the dominant and privileged religion of Sri Lanka. Most top Sinhalese policy makers and most leading analysts I have interviewed in Sri Lanka, are now convinced that these choices contributed to turning the non- issue of Tamil separatism in the 1940s into one of the world’s most intractable and bloody conflicts.⁹

⁷ Ibid,p.105.

⁸ Ibid,p.122.

⁹ For an excellent article on how bad political choices in Sri Lanka turned a near non-issue into this crisis, and how better political choices in Malaysia helped moderate their multinational tensions, see Donald I. Horowitz, “Incentives and Behaviour in the Ethnic Politics of Sri Lanka and Malaysia”,Third World Quarterly (October 1989):18-35.

In the period leading up to independence South India witnessed much more discussion of separatism than did Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). However, as we shall see, on virtually all the strategic decisions facing multinational India, the rejection of a unitary state, the acceptance of multiple but complementary political identities, the upgrading of regional languages and the maintenance of a English as a link language, the maintenance of polity-wide careers, the constitutional espousal of “equal distance and respect” for all religions, and the creation of mutually beneficial alliances between polity wide and regional parties, India, unlike Sri Lanka, made choices and alliances, especially in South India, that I will argue increased the chances of peaceful democracy in a potentially conflictual setting.¹⁰

Since I believe we have under-analyzed relatively successful multinational federal democratic experiences I propose to explore the South Indian case. But first I will explore how and why multinational democracies are poorly theorized and I will construct a new interpretive framework for what works, and what does not work, concerning the successful construction of democratic federations in polities with “politically robust multinational dimensions.”

Constructing a Useable Grammar for Analyzing Democratic Multi-National Federations

¹⁰ However, as Dipankar Gupta tellingly documents and analyses, a series of bad political choices and actions by the government of Indira Gandhi helped turn the near non –issue of Sikh separatism in the Punjab into a bloody crisis that weakened for a while once strong Sikh multiple and complementary identities and eroded the quality of democracy not only in the Punjab but in India. See his “The Communalising of Punjab, 1980-1985”, Economic and Political Weekly (July 13, 1985):1185-1190.

There is an extremely long tradition in democratic social analysis that virtually argues that the term “multinational democracy” is an oxymoron.¹¹ I will not repeat that argument here but rather I will suggest a “grammar” for thinking about how to increase, or decrease, the possibilities of a multinational democracy.

The Oxford Dictionary defines grammar as “rules of a language’s inflection or other means of showing relation between words.” Unfortunately we do not yet have a conceptual and political grammar that captures the relationships that are most, and those that are least, useful in crafting supportive relations between the “multi-national,” “democratic,” and “federal,” fields of political force. Eight phrases that must be culturally unpacked and then put together into a coherent relationship to each other, before we can construct a theoretical language about multi-national federations, are:

1. Individual and Collective rights.
2. Culturally Unassimilable but Politically Integratable
3. Multiple and Complementary Identities.
4. “Cultural Nationalism” versus “Territorial Nationalism”
5. “Coming together” versus “Holding together” Federations
6. “Demos-Enabling” to “Demos-Constraining” Continuum
7. “Asymmetrical” instead of “ Symmetrical” Federalism
8. “ “Polity-Wide” and “Centric-Regional” Parties and Careers

I initially constructed these conceptual “ pairings” for general theoretical purposes.¹² However, all eight pairings come into analytical and political play when we

¹¹ See my “ Modern Multinational Democracies: Transcending a Gellnerian Oxymoron”, in my Arguing Comparative Politics (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.181-199,

¹² Parts of my discussion of the first three pairs is drawn, with permission, from a longer analysis found in *Ibid.*

discuss the Indian model of federalism, and they also come into play in our attempt to explain why the potential issue of Dravidian, and especially Tamil, separatism in the 1940s became a “non-issue” by the early 1970s.

1. Individual and Collective Rights

A polity can not be a democracy unless the individual rights of all its citizens are enshrined in the constitution and a polity-wide system of horizontal and vertical controls is credibly established to enforce these rights. Whatever the rights of the national sub-units, they cannot constitutionally or politically violate the rights of individual citizens. The enforcement of individual rights can be an obligation of both the centre and the sub-units, but the centre cannot completely delegate responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of democratic rights and continue to be a democracy.

The above point insisted upon, it is also possible that in a multi-national polity, some groups can only participate fully as individual citizens, if as a group they acquire the right to have some schooling, mass media, religious or even legal structures which respond to the specifics of their culture. Some of these rights might be called “group specific” collective rights.

An assumption of many thinkers in the liberal tradition is that all rights are individual and universal. This assumption should properly be seen as a normative preference. Advocates of such a liberal approach are prone to see any deviation from individualism and universalism with suspicion.¹³

Thinkers associated with the liberal tradition of rights are particularly skeptical of group rights, and thus, at least implicitly, of many of the “consociational practices” that I, and thinkers such as Arend Lijphart, believe could be used to craft democracy in a multi-national polity.

¹³ For a discussion of the liberal tradition and its discomfort with “group rights,” see Will Kymlicka, Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), esp. chapter 4.

As a student of the historical development of democracies, and as an empirical democratic theorist, let me make four observations about what I think could be, and at times actually have been, democratic “group specific rights,” to use Will Kymlicka’s phrase.

First, individuals are indeed the primary bearers of rights and no group right should violate individual rights in a democratic polity. In a democratic multi-national federal state, this means that something like a Bill of Individual Rights should be a property of the federal centre and that any laws and social policies that violate this polity-wide bill of individual rights must fall outside the constitutionally guaranteed policy scope of sub-units.

Second, while individual rights are universal, it is simply bad history to argue that in actual democracies all rights have been universal. Frequently, the struggle to reconcile the imperatives of political integration and to recognize the legitimate imperatives of cultural difference has meant according group specific rights such as those given to the Maori in New Zealand, to religious and linguistic cultural councils in Belgium, and to Muslim family courts in India.¹⁴ The key point is that it is the obligation of the democratic state to ensure that no group specific right violates universal individual rights. As long as this political condition obtains, there is no contradiction between individual rights and group specific rights.

Third, while individuals are the bearers of rights, there may well be concrete moments in the crafting of a democracy where individuals cannot develop and exercise their full rights until they are active members of a group that struggles for some collective goods common to most members of the group and that are being denied to them.¹⁵ If Catalans (who under Franco were not allowed to organize Catalan

¹⁴ See Kymlicka, *op. cit.*; Lijphart, *Democracies...* *op. cit.*; and Lijphart, “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy...,” *op.cit.*.

¹⁵ An elegant development of this argument is found in the work of the Oxford legal theorist, Joseph Raz, The Morality of Freedom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. chapters 8 and 10; and his Ethics

organizations or to have Catalan language radio and television programs) had not been given some group specific rights, it is not clear that they could have developed as individual democratic activists. It was partially the group rights won by Catalans that contributed to their power to argue, vote and negotiate for a form of devolution and power-sharing in the newly constructed Spanish federation.¹⁶

Fourth, the types of group specific rights I have discussed in the three points above may not be consistent with some 19th century tenets of Anglo-Saxon liberal democracy, or the French idea of citizenship in a nation-state, but they are consistent with a polity in which group rights do not violate individual rights and where effective democratic citizenship and loyalty is broadened. They are in fact often one of the few ways to craft democracy in the difficult and populous world of multi-national states.

2. Culturally Unassimilable but Politically Integratable

The bad news is that “nation-building” and “democracy-building” are complementary logics in a mono-national federation but- at least in the short run- conflicting logics in a newly democratic multi-national federation. In the normative and sociological context of the modern world, assimilation of two or more cultural nations into one nation-state, in two generations, is extremely difficult. Policies that are imposed to attempt to produce such rapid cultural assimilation will almost certainly tend to generate counter-movements of conflict, disloyalty, and structurally induced exit movements that work against the consolidation, or persistence, of democracy.

in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), esp. preface and chapters 1, 6 and 8.

¹⁶ For extensive argumentation and documentation of this point see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), chapters 2, 6, and 20.

The good news is that cultural assimilation is not necessary in order to consolidate democracy. What is necessary is sufficient agreement about the legitimacy of institutions by which the demos, and all its demoi, can produce a central government and regional governments, all of which are bounded by a credible set of broadly accepted constitutional provisions and mechanisms to ensure that both the central and regional governments act within the law. The Catalans in Spain did not want to be, and could not have been, culturally assimilated into post-Franco Spain. However, as a result of their co-participation in a complex series of debates and votes resulting in a devolution of power in a previously unitary state, a sufficiently high degree of political integration was attained for Spain to become a consolidated multinational federal democracy.

3. Multiple and Complementary Identities

A democratic federal system by most definitions must have credible guarantees that there are some policy areas that are constitutionally beyond the scope of the centre, and some that are constitutionally beyond the scope of the sub-units. For example, for Robert A. Dahl, federalism is “a system in which some matters are exclusively within the competence of certain local units - cantons, states, provinces - and are constitutionally beyond the scope of the authority of the national government; and where certain other matters are constitutionally outside the scope of the authority of the smaller units.”¹⁷ One of the reasons for the force of this definitional requirement is that

¹⁷ Robert A. Dahl, “Federalism and Democratic Process” in Democracy, Identity and Equality (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1986), pp. 114-126. Citation from p. 114. Emphasis in the original.

if there were no areas where the centre has the potential democratic authority to impose polity-wide policy, the political system would be at most a confederation, in which unanimity rules apply, and there would be few normative or institutional constraints against unilateral secession. Likewise, if there were no areas where the centre could not democratically impose policy on the sub-units, the system would not be federal, but at most, a highly decentralised unitary state.

If we accept some version of the above argument, then one must also accept the political fact that citizens in a democratic federal system are simultaneously subject to two different governments each of which is sovereign in some areas.¹⁸ Any democratic federal system, but especially a multi-national federal system, can therefore be subject to centrifugal and/or centripetal pressures leading to the breakdown of the system. Extreme centrifugal pressures could manifest themselves by violent efforts by culturally distinctive sub-units to secede. Extreme centripetal pressures could be manifested by the coercive abolition by the centre of the constitutionally guaranteed areas of authority of the sub-units.

Given the above potential pressures threatening to cause a breakdown of multi-national federations, the more citizens in the sub-units feel there are resources that they value, and have reasonable access to, such as security, polity-wide careers, and participation in a large common market, while at the same time, securely enjoying autonomy in areas such as language, education, and communications, the more likely dual loyalty to the centre and the sub-units is politically possible, and the less likely

¹⁸ This minimalist statement of sovereignty is consistent with acknowledging that in modern federalism there is much overlapping in jurisdictions. Martin Grodzin's famous analysis that US federalism is not so much a "layer cake" as a "marbled cake" can be accepted, without rejecting Dahl's definition.

secessionist efforts can be presented as absolutely necessary for the dignity and development of the nation. If a situation similar to what I have just described prevails, violent secessionists may exist, but they will tend to be weakly supported.

A functioning democratic federal system therefore is strengthened to the extent that its citizens have, or develop, multiple and complementary identities. But what is the conceptual, political, and empirical status of multiple and complementary identities? The grammar of identities, especially that espoused by would be territorial nationalists who want to craft an independent nation-state, are often expressed as zero-sum, and of course can become, zero sum. Some writers who call identities “primordial”, in essence depict identities as fixed, singular, and zero sum. But, numerous historical, anthropological and attitudinal studies have documented circumstances in which identities are shown to have been quite malleable, indeed to have changed rapidly, in a short time.

In this debate about identities between “primordialists” and “social constructionists” the irony of course is that political activists with secessionist agendas know that identities are not fixed. Indeed, their political task is precisely to try to convince putative members of their political community that multiple identities are not in the interest of “the nation”, that they must abjure any residual multiple and complementary identities, and to choose a singular, often antagonistic, identity. Intransigent central government policies that block any group rights in the areas of cultural autonomy or cultural nationalism, often facilitate the political tasks of the territorial nationalists.

Precisely because identities, both culturally and/or politically articulated, are not fixed and permanent, the quality of democratic leadership in a multi-national federation is particularly important. Multiple and complementary identities can be nurtured by political leadership. So can polar and conflictual political identities. Building on my joint work with Juan Linz let me show how multiple and complementary identities can be socially constructed in a nurturing and highly interactive way in a multi-national state.

In the first four years after the death of Franco, sentiments in favour of independence virtually doubled in the Basque Country, and tripled in Catalonia. However, after a sequence of state-wide elections for a constituent assembly, consensual crafting of a constitution, a referendum on the constitution, negotiations between elected officials from the centre and the regions concerning devolution of power to the regions, a referendum in Catalonia and the Basque Country to approve the parameters of such devolution, and the subsequent implementation of Spain's new federal system of 'autonomías,' sentiment in favour of independence declined sharply. Indeed, three years after the consensual creation of Spain's new federal system, of five possible identities that respondents in a 1982 survey could choose from ('Catalan', 'More Catalan than Spanish', 'Equally Catalan and Spanish', 'More Spanish than Catalan', and 'Spanish'), the modal self-identification chosen was 'Equally Catalan and Spanish'. Even when one breaks down the survey respondents to 'both parents born in Catalonia', or 'neither parent born in Catalonia', the modal category among both groups of respondents was 'Equally Catalan and Spanish'. In another survey among Catalans, 82

percent were ‘Proud to be Catalan’, 73 percent were ‘Proud to be Spanish’, and 83 percent were also in favour of ‘Unification of Europe via the European Community’.¹⁹

The best proof is an existence proof. Clearly the data from Spain and Catalonia prove three things:

- 1) Political identities are not permanent but can be highly changeable and socially constructed.
- 2) Human beings are capable of multiple and complementary identities.
- 3) People can simultaneously identify with, and give loyalty to, different types of complementary political sovereignties. In Catalonia, the evidence indicates that citizens were strongly and positively identified with a national sub-unit of a federation (Catalonia), the state of the multi-national federation (Spain), and a potential supra-state confederation (the European Union).

4. “Cultural Nationalism” versus “Territorial Nationalism”

Conceptually and empirically we can imagine cultural nationalism within a multi-national polity being responded to in such a way so as to contribute to political integration, or to political separatism.

The political integration (but not assimilation) outcome could be one in which individual rights are respected, but substantial powers, especially in cultural areas such as language, education and communication, are devolved to federal sub-units, with some protection for minorities or the choices of individuals. If the most politically salient cultural demands were met by this devolution, and many cultural nationalists or their

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For these surveys, see Linz and Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, pp. 98-107.

allies had political and non-political careers and activities that were furthered by being active members of the federation, polity wide political integration and subnational cultural nationalism can be pursued simultaneously. In such a context, territorial nationalists seeking independence would not be widely supported, and should they use violence, they would tend to be socially and legally marginalised by cultural nationalists who are the democratic majority.

We can of course imagine the opposite dynamic starting from identical cultural nationalist demands. If the cultural nationalist demand, for example, is for the sub-unit to be administered in the minority language and for some, mutually agreed “link language” to be used for communication with the centre (and indeed in some cases for access to jobs in the centre) but the centre insists that the multi-lingual polity functions as a mono-lingual federation, territorial nationalists, who might have been in a small minority, might begin to win many allies. Indeed, if the centre is perceived as using illegitimate force against cultural nationalists, support could grow quite rapidly for the use of violence by the once small territorial nationalists.

5. “Coming Together” versus “Holding Together” Federations

Much of the classic literature on federalism was influenced by the model developed in Philadelphia in 1787. Indeed, for many theorists not only did the United States “invent” federalism but it remains the norm.²⁰ For such theorists, the essence of the US style of federalism is that previously sovereign polities voluntarily enter into a

²⁰ See for example, William H. Riker, “The Invention of Centralized Federalism” in his The Development of American Federalism (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987), pp. 17-42. K.C. Wheare, Federal Government (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) categorically asserts that “The modern idea of what federal government is has been determined by the United States of America.”, p. 1. Wheare not only measured all other federations against the US federation, but explicitly made the judgement that, “the government of the United States is the most successful federal government in the world.” Ibid., p. 85.

federal bargain to pool their sovereignty in a federation. In this “coming together” federation each of the previous sovereign units retains many of their self-governing rights. In order that the previously sovereign units will continue to play a major role in the governing of the new federation the small states at Philadelphia refused to join the federation unless two other concessions to their continued sovereignty were made. The federation would have a bi-cameral legislature, one chamber based on the principle of population, the other chamber based on the principle of territory. In the territorial chamber, each of the previously sovereign states would receive, regardless of population, an equal number of votes. The second major concession made to the small states was that the upper chamber would have virtually the same competencies as the lower chamber.²¹

The most influential theorist of modern federalism in the English language, William H. Riker, argues that all federations follow the “coming together” federal bargain. From a comparative perspective this is simply not so.²² A major alternative is a “holding together” federation. In 1977, when Franco died, Spain was a unitary state. But in the two years that followed his death it began increasingly clear to many leading political figures that if Spain were to “hold together” peacefully, and to build a

²¹ For an excellent discussion of how and why these compromises were made see Elaine K. Swift, The Making of an American Senate: Reconstitutive Change in Congress, 1787-1841 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 1-94. Also see William H. Riker, The Development of American Federalism, pp. 17-42.

²² Riker insists on the “federal bargain” but the phrase “coming together” federation is not his. The phrase figures prominently, as a necessary contrast to “holding together” federations, in the Linz and Stepan book, in progress, and in Alfred Stepan, “Toward a New Comparative Politics of Federalism, (Multi-Nationalism, and Democracy: Beyond Rikerian Federalism” in Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 315-363.

democracy, the centre should agree to devolve power.²³ Belgium has historically been a unitary state, but in order to hold the Flemish and Walloon communities together, Belgium in 1993 adopted a federal constitution.²⁴ Linz and I call constitutions such as those in Spain and Belgium examples of “holding together” federalism.

If the distinction between “coming together” and “holding together” federalism is accepted, we then need to ask whether it makes a difference if a multi-national polity is close to a “holding together” ideal type, as opposed to a “coming together” ideal type of federation. I think it makes a vital difference. In a “coming together” federation the “principle of territory” of the upper house could be given as much political weight as the “principle of population” of the lower house. In a “coming together” federation the boundaries and prerogatives of the sub-units would be spelled out in great constitutional detail and be extremely difficult to change. In a “holding together” federation which starts from a unitary state, the major endeavor of the constitution is not so much to protect “states rights”, but rather to give sufficient degrees of freedom for the democratic majority in the lower house to pass legislation that might prevent the polity from disintegrating.

²³ For the new statutes in Spain, see Juan J. Linz, “Spanish Democracy and the Estado de las Autonomías,” in Robert A. Goldwin, Art Kaufman, and William A. Schambra eds., Forging Unity out of Diversity: The Approach of Eight Nations (Washington D.C.: American Institute for Public Policy Research, 1989), pp. 260-326 and Robert Agronoff, “Asymmetrical and Symmetrical Federalism in Spain: An Examination of Intergovernmental Policy,” in Bertus de Villiers, ed., Evaluating Federal Systems (Pretoria: Juta, 1994), pp. 61-89.

²⁴ For Belgium’s construction of a federal system with consociational characteristics see Liesbeth Hooghe, “Belgium: From Regionalism to Federalism,” Regional Politics and Policy, 3 (Autumn 1993), pp. 44-69, Robert Senelle, “The Reform of the Belgian State” in Joachim Jens Hesse and Vincent Wright eds., Federalizing Europe ? The Costs, Benefits and Preconditions of Federal Political Systems(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 266-324 and Wilfried Swenden: “Belgium: a Federal State in Search of a Nation” paper prepared for a Conference on Democracy, Nationalism and Federalism at All Souls College, University of Oxford, June 5-8, 1997.

It is even possible that a “holding together” federation would allow the demos to redraw the boundaries of the sub-units. The power of the demos at the centre to redraw the boundaries of the demoi of the sub-units is not something that a US style “coming together”, states-rights type of constitution could easily tolerate. Conceptually and historically therefore, the new grammar of comparative federalism, especially as it relates to multi-national states, must be expanded to incorporate the possibility of a “holding together” federation, with all it entails, as well as a “coming together” federation. Indeed it is not clear that any multi-national state has even had a “coming together” federation if the nations had had a prior period of independence as nation-states. Strictly speaking Switzerland’s cantons were not nation-states but historically based communities many of which shared similar languages and religions.

6. The “Demos-Enabling” to “Demos-Constraining” Continuum

Regardless of whether a federation is close to the “coming together” or “holding together” pole it is necessarily somewhat demos-constraining in contrast to a democratic unitary system. This is so because, if we follow Dahl’s definition, the policy agenda of the demos of the centre can not be completely open because some potential policy areas are constitutionally beyond its scope because they are the prerogative of the sub-units. However, democratic federations can, and do, vary greatly as to the degree to which the demos at the centre is constrained by the powers of the demoi in the sub-units. The US model, with its combination of “asymmetrical” over-representation of territory, but its equality of legislative power between the lower and upper houses, is at the high end of the demos-constraining end of the continuum. Other types of federalism, however, can be, and are, much less demos-constraining, in that the lower house is clearly the most

powerful house in policy scope, and the upper house has some degree of proportional representation. This does not mean that the demos at the centre might not agree to grant an impressive range of authority to the sub-units, especially in the areas of language, education, and communication. Indeed, the federation could be considered to be “demos-enabling” if the majority at the centre is given significant powers to occasionally pass legislation it considers necessary to maintain the democratic integration of the federation.

The question for us is whether a multi-national federation and a mono-national federation would both function equally well as democracies anywhere in the demos-constraining continuum. I think a strong a priori case can be made that a mono-national federation could function democratically more easily at the high end of the demos constraining continuum than can a multi-national federation. I believe that a cluster of sub-units with a large population - say 20 times as large as the small sub-units - would not co-exist easily with a cluster of small units that had an equal vote with the larger sub-units on all policy issues. This would be especially so if the greatly underrepresented states encompassed a religious or cultural majority in the federation.

I also think that a case could be made that a federation that is crafted as a multi-national “holding together” federation, where fear of fragmentation is still a concern among political leaders at the centre, would be more likely to want to give “demos enabling” powers to the centre. “Demos enabling” powers to the centre will allow the demos at the centre to structure devolution in such a way as not to threaten the capacity of the centre to pass binding legislation in the lower house by normal majorities, instead of by the norm of supermajorities. A federation at the low end of the demos-constraining continuum would also prevent small blocking minorities in the upper chamber from impeding ordinary legislation, especially legislation that did not intrinsically relate to cultural issues of the sub-units.

7. “Asymmetrical” instead of “Symmetrical” Federalism

It is very important to raise some questions about erroneous and wide-spread conceptions about what constitutes “authentic” federalism. Such conceptions have prevented this “asymmetrical versus symmetrical” distinction from entering the normal vocabulary used by theorists of democracy and federalism. Many thinkers assume that US style “coming together” and “symmetrical” federalism is both the quantitative and normative standard. It is neither. Since the French Revolution created the modern idea of a nation-state not a single nation-state has yet freely yielded its sovereignty to join a coming together symmetrical democratic federation. But four polities with a strong multinational component- India, Canada, Belgium, and Spain- have created federations, all of which were “asymmetrical”.

If independent states, many of which are nation-states, ever make the European Union, not their own states, the central locus of democratic power, such a democratic federation would almost certainly be “asymmetrical”. It would be constructed as “asymmetrical” both to ensure some special prerogatives to the larger states without which it is doubtful they all will join and thus accept a much greater loss of autonomy than they have to date. Such a European Union would also be “asymmetrical” so as to constitutionally spell-out, and embed, some of the culturally specific rights and prerogatives of members.

8. “Polity-Wide” and “Centric-Regional” Parties (and Careers)

“Polity-wide” parties, are parties with a strong organizational, electoral, and emotional presence in all, or virtually all, the member units of a federation. The presence or absence of “polity-wide” parties (especially those that allow and indeed facilitate polity- wide careers, identities, and free movement for all citizens) is correctly seen as a key variable in the literature on federalism, especially the literature on multinational polities. In multinational polities the presence of such strong polity- wide

parties is correctly considered a politically integrating force and their relative absence a source of disintegration.

In contrast “regional parties” are parties that receive almost all their votes in one unit, or geographic space, in the federation. Such parties are normally seen as a threat to integration, particularly if they receive a substantial amount of the total votes and seats in the federation and act as exclusionary institutions. I do not dissent from this general judgment.

However I believe our vocabulary and our theories would benefit by an awareness of what I would term “centric- regional” parties. By this I mean a party that does indeed get all of its seats to the federal legislature from one federal unit. But, if the political system is parliamentary, such a party might be in a valuable alliance with a polity-wide party which, in return for the centric-regional party constituting part of its majority, makes the centric-regional party a part of the governing coalition at the center.

The polity-wide party could also act as a junior partner to the “centric-regional” party in provincial or state elections. The alliance with a polity-wide party could thus directly generate votes, seats and numerous federal level jobs for the “centric-regional” party. In such a situation, both from the viewpoint of politics and rational choice, it would seem that the alliance creates disincentives for the once regional party to support system disintegrative politics. Among other dangers, if the centric-regional party became secessionist, or even “semi-loyal” towards the federal state, it would immediately risk becoming “uncoalitionable” with its valuable polity-wide party ally.

There is also the possibility in a parliamentary federal system that a large number of once regional parties could themselves constitute the central government and in the process become integrating “centric-regional” parties.

India: A Multi-National Federal Democracy

If our purpose is to examine political and social processes within multi-national societies, and to see how federations help, or hinder, democracy, India seems a particularly significant case to explore.

India is 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 the mid 1990s of the only other multi-national federal democracies - Spain, Canada, and Belgium – was less than 80 million, which was almost 70 million less than the most populous of India's states, Uttar Pradesh.

Conceptually and comparatively India's poverty raises important questions. 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶ For purposes of comparison, if Lijphart had included India as a long-standing democracy (as he does in this volume) 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

²⁵ 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 I discuss Lipset's proposition in our, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 77.

²⁶ 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.

Ireland, the next poorest long-standing democracy in Lijphart's list of twenty-one countries, and 14.2 times poorer than the average.²⁷ 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. For our purposes we will need to explore if India's model of federalism contributed to this result, and if so, how.²⁸

The question of India's comparative poverty may also enhance 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 \$2,248.²⁹

India's democratic federation is also of interest to 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 - in 1997, India's Islamic population constituted a "minority" of at least 120 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 the "clash of civilizations," and some see Islamic society as being in deep cultural conflict with democracy, it is worth reflecting upon the

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ It is analytically a separate question as to whether India's democracy, as processed by its model of multi-national federalism, contributed to its relatively slow growth in the first thirty years of independence. But it should be noted that in the last twenty years (1984-2003) India has easily been in the top fifth of the world in terms of its GDP growth rate.

²⁹ Figures are given in GDP per capita in US dollars at current prices in PPP terms in the World Bank's World Development Indicators database.

fact that the world's largest Islamic community with extensive democratic experience is in multi-cultural and consociational India.

One of the greatest conflicts in multi-cultural and multinational states, federal or not, is over language. India is extraordinarily interesting concerning its diversity of languages. 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.³⁰ 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?

A final reason why the study of Indian democracy is of particular interest to comparativists is precisely because of the non-absorption of Indian-based scholars, and even Indian experience, into the main-stream literature, or even the "invisible colleges", concerned with democracy, and especially democratization.³¹ In the main, Indian scholar's most creative work has been on such themes as caste, nationalism, colonialism, and what is called "subaltern studies," rather than on democratic

³⁰ 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.

³¹ 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). 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.

institutions per se.³² The analysis of multi-national democratic federalism in India therefore presents a great challenge, and opportunity, for deepening our understanding of democracy in the modern world.

Reasons of space (and knowledge) obviously do not allow me to attempt a full-blown analysis of Indian federalism. I will thus restrict myself to a comparative discussion of how the Indian model of federalism most differs – on the whole for excellent reasons- from US federalism, and I will attempt to explain how and why the ties that bind were more important than any “imagined community” for the Tamils in South India. India’s choice of federalism, indeed it’s special type of federalism, is crucial to this explanation.

A Potential Issue of Separatism Becoming a Non-Issue: South India

By Benedict Anderson’s standards there would appear to have been more than enough raw material for territorial nationalists to imagine (and attain) separate independent nation(s) in South India.³³ Useable cleavages abounded. In the last decades of the British Raj more than ninety percent of the population in South India spoke languages in the Dravidian family, all of which had their own scripts and were unintelligible to the major language of the North, Hindi.³⁴

Another useable cleavage grew out of religious-cultural differences. In the South, the Brahmins were seen as Northern in origin. Nationalists in the South argued

³² Two excellent critical bibliographies on Indian, and non-Indian, scholarly writings are found in Partha Chatterjee, ed., State and Politics in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 566-576, and Sunil Khilnani, The Idea of India (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997), pp. 217-242.

³³Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983).

³⁴ 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. 46-47.

that traditional Dravidian culture had been more socially egalitarian than the version of Hinduism imported, and imposed upon Dravidians, by Northern Brahmins. The potential of caste to be a polarising force was enhanced by the fact that under British rule Brahmins were accorded a new higher social status that in effect lowered the social status of some previously quite socio-economically, and even religiously important, South Indian caste groups.³⁵ For some analysts, the two intermediate Hindu castes, Kshatriya and Vaisya, were virtually not present in South India and South Indians belonged, therefore, to either the lowest category of caste Hindu - the Shudras - or were untouchables, or even “unseeable”, outcasts and this increased the social and political distance of Southern, from Northern Indians.³⁶

Modernity, à la Gellner, sharpened South Indians’ sense of exclusion, and contributed to growing anti-Brahmin nationalist movements. The emerging Dravidian nationalist movements in the early decades of the twentieth century gained adherents as they documented and dramatized job-related statistics aiming to prove that non-Brahmins were second-class citizens in South India. For example, the famous “Non-Brahmin Manifesto of 1916” argued that though Brahmins constituted less than 3 percent of the population in the major administrative sub-unit of South India (the Presidency of Madras), all but one of the sixteen top civil service positions allocated to Indians in the Madras Presidency were held by Brahmins, all four of the Hindu judges to the Madras Supreme Court were Brahmins, and that the major gate-keeper of modern careers, the University of Madras, was effectively controlled by Brahmins.³⁷

³⁵ See Nicholas B. Dirks, Castes of Mind : Colonialism and the Making of Modern India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), especially Chapters One and Twelve.

³⁶ For this argument see Marguerite Ross Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp.46-47.

³⁷ The manifesto is reproduced in its entirety in the previously cited Irschick, Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916 - 1929, pp. 358-367. From 1901 to 1911 Brahmins received 71 percent of the degrees awarded by Madras University and controlled the key power centre in the university, the Senate, Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, p. 20.

Would be territorial nationalists had other valuable material. They could point to the fact that they were economically more developed than the Hindi belt of North India, which they saw as politically dominant; that South India was geographically contained, in that three of its four borders were oceans; and that they were populous enough to make a number of South Indian independent nations. At independence this geographic, demographic, and imagined space contained 88 million speakers of Dravidian languages, the four largest of which in 1951 were Telugu (thirty-three million), Tamil (twenty-seven million), Kannada (fourteen million) and Malayalam (thirteen million). The cultural capital of the Tamils was the city of Madras in the Madras presidency but the Dravidian movement also contained important advocates from the other three major Dravidian languages many of whom also lived in the Madras presidency.³⁸

A leading scholar of India, Lloyd I. Rudolph who did extensive research in South India in the 1950s, graphically captures how the different components of territorial nationalism seemed to be compounding at the time of Independence: “With the coming of independence, anti-Brahmanism was increasingly accompanied by an anti-North, Dravidian nationalist outlook. Opposition to Hindi as the national language, the destruction of the caste system, and threats of secession from the Indian Union became major political themes.”³⁹

The Constitutional Formula: The “Holding-Together” and “Demos-Enabling” Dimensions

³⁸ For the list of the major languages of India as of 1951 see Gupta, Language Conflict and National Development, pp. 46-47.

³⁹ Lloyd I. Rudolph, “Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XX, No 3, (May 1961), pp. 286-287.

Why then, did the potential issues of “territorial nationalism” and secession become non-issues? To explore these questions we have to turn to the incentive systems that were developed as part of Indian federalism. To analyze this process we will have to employ virtually all the grammar that we developed in the beginning of this article.

In terms of the analytic categories we have developed, India approaches the ideal type of a “holding-together” and a “demos-enabling” federation. Let us briefly examine the “holding together” and “non-bargaining” characteristics of the creation of federalism in India in order to show how they differ from the “coming together” and “bargaining” modalities associated with the creation of U.S. style federations. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, B.R. Ambedkar, when he presented the draft constitution for the consideration of the members of the Constituent Assembly, was very explicit that the Indian constitution was designed to maintain the unity of India. He argued that the Indian constitution was guided by principles and mechanisms that were thus fundamentally different from those found in the United States constitution. In his address to the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar assumed that India was already a diverse polity with substantial unity, but that to maintain this unity, under democratic conditions, a federation would be useful. Ambedkar told the members of the Assembly that: “... the use of the word Union is deliberate... The Drafting Committee wanted to make it clear that though India was to be a federation, the Federation was not the result of an agreement by the States to join in a Federation and that the Federation not being the result of an agreement no State has the right to secede from it... Though the country and the people may be divided into different States for convenience of

administration the country is one integral whole, its people a single people living under a single imperium derived from a single source.”⁴⁰

Mohit Bhattacharya, in a careful review of the mind-set of the founding fathers, points out that by the time Ambedkar presented the draft to the constituent assembly in November 1948, both the partition between Pakistan and India, and the somewhat reluctant and occasionally even coerced integration of virtually all the 568 Princely states, had already occurred. Therefore a bargaining situation of sovereign units, crucial to Rikerian views of “coming together” federalism, in essence no longer existed when Ambedkar presented his draft Constitution.⁴¹ Bhattacharya’s reading of the Constituent Assembly papers is that the central motivation in the minds of the constitution drafters was to hold the centre together. “What ultimately emerged was a ‘devolutionary federation’ as a fundamentally unitary state devolved powers on the units through a long process of evolution... [Once] the problem of integration of the Princely States had disappeared after partition, the ‘federal situation’ itself had virtually evaporated with it...

The bargaining situation disappeared... The architects of the Constitution were sensitive

⁴⁰ Ambedkar’s speech is found in its entirety in India, Constituent Assembly Debates (New Delhi, 1951), vol.II, pp. 31-44. Underlining added.

⁴¹ To be sure if the partition had not occurred, and if the Muslim territories that are now Pakistan and Bangladesh had sent representatives to the constituent assembly, a bargaining framework would have predominated. In such a context the bargaining power of the princely states, especially the Muslim ruled princely states in central India such as Hyderabad, would also have been augmented. Once the violent partition began however, both the Congress party leaders in the Constituent Assembly, and the last British Vice-Roy, Lord Mountbatten, felt that a new geo-political situation existed. In this new context the Nehru-government actually used military force to integrate the largest princely state, Hyderabad, in September 1948. Mountbatten, on numerous informal and formal occasions, let the princely states inside India’s new borders know that a bargaining situation no longer existed. He urged them to join the Indian Union and said that if they did not, the United Kingdom would not let them join the British Commonwealth as Independent States. Two key books that shed light on the non-bargaining context after partition are V.P. Menon, Integration of the Indian States (Madras: Orient Longman, 1956) and Ian Copland, The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

pragmatists. Their attention was focused on ... the central authority that would hold the nation together.”⁴²

The Indian National Congress (normally referred to as the Congress Party) was the major political and ideological force in the Constituent Assembly. The Congress Party was working in a somewhat traumatized atmosphere. Due to the unexpected violence and turmoil associated with the partition millions of people crossed the borders to join Pakistan or India, and perhaps as many as a million people lost their lives in the violence. In this new and threatening context the Congress Party was especially focused on the devices to ensure unity within the great diversity of India. Let me quote Ambedkar’s address again: “The ... Constitution has sought to forge means and methods whereby India will have Federation and at the same time will have uniformity in all basic matters which are essential to maintain the unity of the country. The means adopted by the Constitution are three: (1) a single judiciary, (2) uniformity in fundamental laws, civil and criminal, and (3) a common All-India Civil Service to man important posts.”⁴³

The successors to the Indian Civil Service, the Indian Administrative Service, not only implemented federal laws, but were assigned by the Centre to play key roles in the government of the states that composed the sub-units of the federation. Indeed, the head of the civil service in all the states was in the beginning, and to this day,

⁴² Mohit Bhattacharya, “The Mind of the Founding Fathers,” in Nirmal Mukarji and Balveer Arora, eds., Federalism in India: Origins and Development (New Delhi: Vikas, 1992), pp. 87-104, quotes from pp. 101-102.

⁴³ Ambedkar, previously cited address to the Constituent Assembly.

simultaneously a member of the regional and the central government.⁴⁴In comparison to many other newly independent countries, the central government of India had control over a useable state, and a disciplined coercive apparatus.

In relation to the demos-constraining versus demos-enabling continuum, India chose one of the most demos-enabling formulas found in any democratic federation, be it mono-national or multi-national. The US formula, which did grow out of a “coming together” bargaining process, gave each state equal representation in the upper house, and gave the upper house somewhat greater legal competencies than the lower house. India’s “holding-together” federation was fundamentally different in both respects. The lower chamber, which was based on the principle of population, had the exclusive right to form the government and was vastly more important in legislative competence than the upper chamber, which represented the states. Also there was a significant degree of proportional representation in the upper chamber. The demos at the centre, aided by the choice of a Westminster type of fused executive-legislative Parliamentary model, was thus nowhere near as constrained in independent India as was the demos at the centre in the divided government, Presidential model, chosen in the United States.

Ambedkar is clear on the majority-enabling and majority-requiring aspects of the Indian political system. He underscored the basic distinction between the American model of division of powers, which allowed divided government at the centre, as

⁴⁴ All top civil servants at the center and in the states must have passed the civil service examination and are members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). However there are two main categories of IAS members, those assigned to the Center, and those assigned as cadres of the states. The latter can be assigned for duties to the Center. For a discussion of the Indian Administrative Service within the political context of an increasingly robust federalism see Beryl A. Radin, “Instruments of Federalism”, *Seminar*, (New Delhi), No 459 (November 1997), pp. 39-47.

opposed to the Indian model of fusion of powers at the centre, which required at least a coalitional party majority at the centre. “The American form of government is called the Presidential system of government... What the [Indian] Constitution proposes is the Parliamentary system. The two are fundamentally different... The American Executive is a non-Parliamentary Executive which means that it is not dependent for its existence upon a majority in the Congress... A Parliamentary Executive... is dependent upon a majority in Parliament. A Parliamentary Government must resign the moment it loses the confidence of a majority of the members of Parliament.”⁴⁵

A major controversy in the Constituent Assembly was over the languages that would be used in the federation. Precisely because the members of the Constituent Assembly knew that the most controversial issue surrounding Indian unity in the future would be language policy, and because there was a desire on the part of many delegates to eventually reorganize the states along more linguistic lines, the language of the constitution was extremely demos-enabling. Future parliaments were given the right to completely redraw state boundaries. Article 3 of the constitution was categorical. With a simple majority “Parliament may by law a) form a state by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more states...; c) diminish the area of any state... e) alter the name of any state.” In a “coming together” federation such as the USA the sovereign states would obviously have been able to bargain successfully for a much more demos-constraining constitution to protect states’ rights.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ambedkar, previously cited address to the Constituent Assembly.

⁴⁶See my “Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model”, *Journal of Democracy* 10 (Fall 1999):19-34 . Indeed,it was precisely this feature of the Indian constitution that led the then leading theorist of federalism in the world, K.C. Wheare of Oxford, to argue that “What makes one doubt that the Constitution

The fact that the demos, as represented in the Constituent Assembly, gave the central parliament the right to work with the numerous linguistic demoi of India to reformulate the states turned out to play a very important role in allowing the demos of India, and the demoi of India, to “hold together” in a multi-national democratic federal system. I will not re-tell that story because it has been well analysed by other writers.⁴⁷ The key point I want to stress here is that in 1955 the federal parliament authorised a States Reorganisation Commission. As a result of that commission eventually most of the units of the Indian federation were geographically and sociologically reconfigured to achieve a greater congruence between languages and state governments. Each state was allowed to carry out its state administration in the dominant language of the state. This major constitutional change meant that a significant degree of politically legitimated linguistic and cultural nationalism had been achieved inside India’s federal polity.

Let us now attempt to analyse how the demos enabling constitutional and linguistic formula was utilised in the attempt to hold together the Hindi speaking North with the speakers of Dravidian family languages in the South. Here we have to turn to the complex question of a polity-wide party, and its relationship to cultural nationalist parties, and the possibility of multiple and complementary identities.

of India is strictly and fully federal, however, are the powers of intervention in the affairs of the states given by the Constitution to the central government and parliament. To begin with, the parliament of India may form new states; it may increase or diminish the area of any state and it may alter the boundaries or name of any state.” See his Federal Government, (1963), p. 27.

⁴⁷ See especially Jyotirindra Das Gupta, Language Conflict and National Development p. 33 and Paul Brass, Language, Religion, and Politics in North India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

The Importance of a “Polity-Wide” Party With Multiple and Complementary Identities

In the immediate pre- and post-independence era, what was the relationship between culturally nationalist “regional parties” or movements, and a “polity-wide” party? In 1944 an off-shoot of previous Dravidian movements, The Self-Respect Movement and the Justice Party, was renamed the Dravida Kazhagam (D.K.). According to Irschick, the D.K.had “as its primary aim the realisation of a separate non-Brahmin or Dravidian country.”⁴⁸ It was led by the charismatic, autocratic, nationalist leader, Periar, who a leading specialist called “one of the most dynamic and colourful political leaders South India has ever produced.” Periar “boycotted independence day celebrations, refused to honour the national flag, just as he later refused to recognise the Indian Constitution.”⁴⁹

For our analytical purposes, it is important to note that this regional nationalist movement had to compete with the polity-wide party, the Indian National Congress. Under the leadership of Motil Nehru, his son Jawaharlal Nehru, and the great mobilizer Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress Party had an All-Indian institutional presence since its formation in 1885. This polity-wide party had acquired great legitimacy and experience owing to its leadership role in the Indian independence movement. However, the Congress Party, most of whose leadership was North Indian, and many of whose leaders were Brahmins, originally made the mistake of recruiting most of its leaders in the

⁴⁸ Irschick, Politics and Social Conflict in South India, p.347. As has been alluded to one of the problems of discussing multinationalism in India is that many Indians do not see India as being multinational and the word “nationalist” is virtually reserved for Congress Party supporters and their independence movement against the British. However, as we have defined the term for use in this article, the DK, with its periodic espousal of territorial independence, meets our definition of “nationalist”.

⁴⁹ See Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. “Religion, Politics and the DMK” in Donald Eugene Smith, ed., South Asian Politics and Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) quotations from p.216 and p.223.

Madras Presidency from the small and culturally alien Brahmin community.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the regional nationalist movement, the DK, led by Periar, never became a party. In 1949 the DK lost some important followers when an equally charismatic, but more democratic leader, C.N. Annadurai left the DK to form a political party called the DMK. The DMK was not yet able to compete successfully with the Congress party in the founding polity-wide elections. In the first post-independence elections in 1952, the Congress Party won 12 of the 14 federal seats in the State of Madras, but only a plurality, 152 of the 375 seats, to the Madras state legislature. The DMK, even though a culturally nationalist party with territorial nationalist goals, supported a United Democratic Front coalition of parties, some of which, the communists and the Socialists, were polity-wide parties.

The original leader of the Congress led government in Madras after the first post-independence elections of 1952 had been a Brahmin, C. Rajagopalachari, who was relatively insensitive to lower caste and Tamil cultural aspirations. But in the new very competitive electoral context, Kamaraj Nadar, a lower caste, Tamil speaking, professional Congress Party organiser became a crucial leader linking Tamils and the Congress Party. Kamaraj did not speak Hindi or English but he combined strong All Indian nationalist and Tamil nationalist roots. Kamaraj, who had spent more than 3000 days in jail for his pro-independent activities, emerged as the king-maker in the Madras

⁵⁰ Indeed the previously cited “Non-Brahmin Manifesto” explicitly laments that fourteen of the fifteen members of the Madras Congress Party Committee were Brahmins, see Irschick, Politics and Social Conflict in South India, p. 361.

Congress Party. By 1954 he had become the Chief Minister of Madras. Significantly there was not one Brahmin in his first cabinet.⁵¹

Jawaharlal Nehru employed a leadership style, both as Prime Minister of the Government and as President of the Congress Party, that relied heavily on the consensual support of regional leaders. Nehru and Kamaraj related to each other in ways that prevented centre-periphery relations from being zero sum. As a major party regional boss, Kamaraj had political resources at the centre. Indeed, Kamaraj became one of the five members of the group called the “syndicate” that co-ruled the Congress Party with Nehru. More, after the death of Nehru, Kamaraj became the President of the Congress Party. Kamaraj was effective as a leader of a polity-wide party partly because his autonomy as a Tamil political and cultural leader was respected by Nehru. Power for both leaders was thus multiple sum. Nehru, by ideological preference, would have preferred a strong Indian central government which generated an increasingly homogeneous nation-state culture. Politically, however, he knew he had to depend upon a core of Congress Party members who represented, and led, India’s major regions with their diverse languages and cultures. In essence Nehru followed a “strong centre, strong sub-unit” policy.

In this type of federal politics, Kamaraj was a regional leader in Tamil speaking India who had sufficient strength and respect in the centre for him to be allowed to deliver upon many “cultural nationalist” demands. But as a regional boss of a large state, Kamaraj could also deliver valuable votes and support to the polity-wide party. Lloyd Rudolph summarizes Kamaraj’s contribution to the strength, inside the state of Madras, of the polity-wide Congress party: “Between 1952 and 1957 Congress increased its share of the popular vote from 35.5 percent to 45.3 percent largely by

⁵¹ See Duncan B. Forrester, “Kamaraj: A Study in Percolation of Style”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol 4, no. 1 (1970), p.54.

identifying itself more closely with the [Tamil] populist appeal...The growth in Congress strength can be attributed largely to the leadership qualities of Mr. Kamaraj.”⁵²

In my discussion of the new “grammar” of federalism I argued that we need to analyze some important democratic federations such as Spain, Belgium, Canada , and India in their multi-national context. Thus I have stressed the importance of “multiple and complementary identities.” I think this concept is valid, and indeed necessary, but perhaps it does not quite capture the dual, but nonetheless occasionally competing identities many nationalists might feel. Most Tamil speakers were very interested in Tamil cultural nationalist goals and from the 1930s on many were members of parties or movements that periodically articulated separatist aspirations. However, many Tamils were also interested in the struggle for Indian independence. Since the most effective mass based, pro-independent organization was the polity-wide Congress Party, notwithstanding the fact that many Tamils were cultural nationalists, precisely because they also identified with the Congress Party, many of these Tamils were not necessarily territorial nationalists.⁵³ As the Chief Minister of Madras, Kamaraj (and the Congress Party) received some cultural nationalist credit for the creation of special quotas for lower caste Tamils and for their support for the Tamil language. A leader like Kamaraj reduced the potential tension between the polity-wide and the cultural nationalist goals. But, without a polity-wide party, he could not have played such a role.

⁵²Lloyd I. Rudolph, “Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XX, No 3, (May 1961), p. 294. On the “cultural nationalist” and “polity-wide party” appeals of Kamaraj also see Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. “Religion, Politics and the DMK” in Donald Eugene Smith, ed., South Asian Politics and Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 226-227.

⁵³ In electoral terms, in the 1920s, the Congress Party with its Pan Indian ideology, and the Dravidian cultural nationalist Justice Party, would seemed to have been in a zero sum relationship. However, the existential reality of people who simultaneously wanted to affirm support for cultural nationalismand Pan Indianism is beautifully shown by a quote from Subramanian “Congress was so popular that by 1927 the Justice Party was forced for reasons of survival to allow its members to have parallel membership in Congress.” See his Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization, p.125.

The fact that the three other major Dravidian speaking areas of India had, by the late 1950s, also been given a state in which the language of the government was their own, ended any possibility of a successful movement for a single independent Dravidian speaking country. This was so because by the late 1950s linguistic cultural nationalist claims for the then 37 million Telegu speakers were organized and articulated by the state of Andhra Pradesh, for the 30 million speakers of Tamil by Madras State (which changed its name to Tamil Nadu in 1968), for the 17 million Kannada speakers by the state of Karnataka, and for the 17 million Malayalam speakers by the state of Kerala.⁵⁴

But, if the 1955 States Reorganization Commission Report effectively ended all chance of a united, separatist, Dravidian movement for a single country, there were still some advocates of a territorially independent country of Tamil Nadu. Why then did the Tamil “cultural nationalists” defeat the Tamil “territorial nationalists”?

From Territorial Nationalism and Separatism to Cultural Nationalism and Political Integration

The constitutional decision to make India a federation made it possible for political activists like Kamaraj to be a cultural nationalist leader at the state level and an All India leader at the centre. Furthermore, the decisions to craft a “demos enabling” and “asymmetrical” federation allowed the parliament at the centre to go forward with the fundamental redrawing of the political boundaries of the federation to reflect the cultural nationalist demands of language. And of course, the political activity and organization of the Indian National Congress since 1885 allowed a polity-wide Party to compete effectively in the elections against cultural nationalists, even in the newly created linguistic states.

⁵⁴ The number of speakers of these languages is from the Census of India, 1961, reproduced in Das Gupta, Language Conflict and National Development p. 46.

The creation of a Tamil speaking state in a context where cultural nationalism was very strong gave the chance to the two Tamil nationalist political organizations, the DMK and the DK, to win control of the state by waging cultural nationalist campaigns. The DMK participated in the election for state and federal legislatures in 1957 but due to the popularity of Congress and Kamaraj it did not do very well. The DK, as a non-party, did not compete in the election but continued with its formal demand for a sovereign and independent country.

In 1959, the DMK, with a campaign focused adroitly on local government, finally won political control of Madras, the largest city, and capital of the state of Madras.⁵⁵

After 1959 the nationalist DMK increasingly began to believe it could win control of the state assembly and the state government and some of its leaders and followers even harbored ambitions for greater political autonomy. However, DMK federal legislators in Delhi, sent back warnings that separatist parties might be made illegal, and that territorial nationalist demands in the state of Madras were unfeasible and dangerous. Not wanting to jeopardize their chance to win control of the state of Madras, the top DMK leaders in 1960, in a closed private meeting, made a decision to implicitly, but not explicitly, to drop their territorial nationalist aspirations.⁵⁶

In the general elections of 1962 the DMK emerged as the major opposition. In the 1962 campaign the DMK ran as a cultural nationalist party that had not formally abandoned territorial nationalism, but secessionist demands did not in fact figure prominently in its campaign. In 1967, the DMK defeated the Congress party, and won control of the state.⁵⁷ From 1967 on the DMK never gave up its cultural nationalism,

⁵⁵ Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, p.105.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 102-115.

⁵⁷ For analysis of the evolution and integration of the DMK into a politically effective, culturally nationalist party, within the Indian federal system see Narendra Subramanian Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization, pp.160-172, Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, especially Chapter 6, "Politics of Loyal Opposition", pp. 118-160, and Robert, L. Hardgrave Jr. "The DMK and the Politics of Tamil

but it did become increasingly integrated into the politics and norms of the Indian federation.

The Struggle to Maintain Multiple and Complementary Identities: The Role of Career Opportunities

One of the elements that can help sustain a politics of multiple and complementary identities in a polity with some multinational dimensions are material interests, especially polity-wide career opportunities. In 1965 and 1970 in Tamil-speaking India, there were two protest movements. Both in essence were struggles to maintain India-wide career opportunities. In one case there was a struggle against language policies that were threatening to be imposed by the centre. In the other case, the struggle was against excessive cultural nationalist policies of the regional government. In both cases, some of the same activists participated.

What was at stake in the first protest movement was that January 26, 1965 was the fifteenth anniversary of the constitution of India. The 1950 constitution stipulated that “it was the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all elements of the composite culture of India.”⁵⁸ Moreover, English was accepted as a “link language” of the federation for fifteen years. The fifteen years lapsed in 1965. There were widespread demands in the Northern Hindi heartland to make Hindi the official language of the Union. In the South there were intense fears that Hindi would become the only acceptable language for entrance examinations to the coveted and powerful

Nationalism” *Pacific Affairs* (Winter 1964-1965): 396-411. For the growing integration of Tamil politics into Indian federal politics by a leading specialist on Indian federalism see Balveer Arora, “Specificite Ethnique, Conscience Regionale et Developpment National: Langues et Federalism en Inde,” (Thèse pour le Doctorat de Recherches, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris, 1972), esp. pp. 193-406.

⁵⁸ Constitution of India, Article 351.

Indian Administrative Service, and for exclusive use in India's courts. A long-time observer of South Indian politics, who was based in Madras in 1965, nicely captured middle class fears about career prospects in this period. "Students, lawyers, and businessmen, indeed the Madras middle class generally, see their interests as tied to the continuance of English as the medium for the Union Public Service Commission's competitive examinations. Northerners and Southerners start from the same point in English; the introduction of Hindi would impose a serious hardship on those for whom it is not their mother tongue."⁵⁹

Faced with the threat of losing these career opportunities, students, supported by lawyers and many other groups, waged for much of January and February 1965 the biggest protests in Madras since the "Quite India" protests of the 1940s. These protests rapidly became riots and government police and army troops opened fire in twenty-one towns in the state, arrested over 10,000 people, and probably killed over 100 people.⁶⁰ The two Tamil-speaking ministers of the federal government (for Agriculture and Petroleum) submitted their resignations.

To stop this growing crisis of multinational India, on February 11, 1965, Prime Minister Shastri announced a crucial decision on an India-wide broadcast: "for an indefinite period...I would have English an associate language...because I do not wish the people of the non-Hindi areas to feel that certain doors of advancement are closed to them... I would have [English] as an alternative language as long as people require it, and the decision [to maintain or revoke English as a link language] I would leave not to the

⁵⁹ Duncan B. Forrester, "The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965: Political Protest and its Effect on Language Policy in India," *Pacific Affairs* (Spring-Summer 1966): pp. 19-36, quote from p.23. Forrester, on the same page, gives a telling detail. From 1948-1962, Madras State, won 23.3% of all places allocated in the Indian Administrative Service, more than any other state in the Union. If English had been eliminated as a link language for federal examinations this figure would have been radically reduced as it was for Tamils in Sri Lanka when English was marginalized.

⁶⁰ For much of these two months the leading newspaper in Madras *The Hindu* carried two or three articles a day on these increasingly bloody and dramatic events such as the self-immolation of a headmaster and others in defence of the Tamil language and also in defence of the use of English, not only Hindi, for careers in the federal government.

Hindi-knowing people, but to the non-Hindi knowing people.”⁶¹ More than thirty-five years later Shastri’s decision remains the de facto policy of the federal government. Both the protests, and the centre’s reaction, contributed to the maintenance of polity-wide careers that help undergird multiple and complementary identities in Tamil Nadu.

What if Hindi had been imposed as the only official language of the Indian federation in 1965? I asked this question to one of the Tamil speaking Union ministers, C. Subramanian, who had submitted his resignation. He told me that the President of India virtually refused to accept it from Prime Minister Shastri and asked Shastri “Do you want to lose Tamil Nadu from India? If not, kindly take back your recommendation”.⁶² Subramanian went on to speculate that if Hindi had been imposed, and English eliminated as a link language, the protest movements would have been more virulent, and once moribund secessionist movement would have suddenly become greatly reinvigorated and possibly have won.⁶³ It is impossible to say if Subramanian’s speculations would have been borne out. However the DMK, which as we have seen had become cultural instead of territorial nationalists, might have come under increasing pressure to reintroduce a territorial nationalist discourse so as not to lose control over the Tamil nationalism. Significantly, Barnett says that during the anti-Hindi mobilizations the DMK, for the first time in many years, lost control over the leadership of the most important Tamil and Dravidian protest movements and could not keep them within constitutional limits.⁶⁴ At the very least it would appear that the combination of Hindi imposition, and the removal of English as a link language for civil service examinations, would have been a major blow, as in Sri Lanka, to the polity-wide

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Cited in Barnett, Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, p. 134. For the 1965 protests see pp. 131-135 in Barnett, Richard L. Hardgrave, Jr. “The Riots in Tamilnad: Problems and Prospects of India’s Language Crisis”, *Asia Survey*, Vol. 5 (August 1965), pp. 399-407 and the previously cited article by Forrester.

⁶² Interview with C. Subramanian, Chennai (Madras), April 1, 1998.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Barnett, Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, pp.132-135.

careers, and multiple and complementary identities, that are so useful in maintaining peaceful and democratic federalism in multinational settings.⁶⁵

In 1967, the DMK political party won the provincial elections, and became the first cultural nationalist party to assume control of an Indian state. The question of career opportunities once again assumed great importance, but in this case students put pressure on the DMK Chief Minister, C.N. Annadurai, not to close off their career paths in the Indian polity and market. Here the desire of a political party's followers to maintain their access to polity-wide careers throughout the federation helped transform a potential exclusionary nationalist "regional party" into "centric-regional" party that allowed dual identities.

Barnett's book *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* nicely shows how political struggle can be waged in the name of keeping open the possibility of multiple and complementary identities. Barnett argues that Annadurai's problems resulted from his proposed policy of progressively making Tamil the dominant, possibly the exclusive, medium of instruction in government colleges. "However, many students protested, demanding a free choice of medium of instruction. This caused colleges to close in late 1970 and early 1971. Many students were interested in high quality English medium instruction, believing it would improve their employment opportunities. They did not see this as a Tamil nationalist issue, and resented the DMK's efforts to define it as such."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Illustrative of how fast political identities can change in a crisis is an interview I had in Madurai (February 4, 2003) with a prominent social scientist. We discussed the five-point political identity scale (analysed earlier in this article for the case of Catalonia). He said that when he was coming of political age from 1960-64 he thought of himself as "more Indian than Tamil" (position 2) because he was very supportive of the ideologies of the Indian Independence movement. However, when the status of Tamil and English were threatened in 1965 he was mobilized into the Anti-Hindi movement and thought of himself as "only Tamil" (position 5) for almost a decade. Since about 1973, by which time he felt that the legitimate Tamil cultural nationalist agenda had been achieved and was secure in federal India, he said he has thought of himself as "equally Tamil and Indian" (position 3).

⁶⁶ Barnett, *Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, p.291. For the tone of this conflict, which was shorter and less intense than that of 1965, but nonetheless important for policy outcomes, see two page 1 articles in *The Hindu*, January 1, 1971.

With elections on the horizon, and fearing damaging demonstrations, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister hastily set up a panel to respond to students' demands. A month and a half before the elections, the Chief Minister defused the potential crisis by accepting the panel's recommendation that "the opportunity to choose the medium of instruction should be available to students."⁶⁷

"Centric-Regional" and "Polity-Wide Parties": An Analysis of Coalitional Incentives

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru died in 1964 and closely fought elections became increasingly important after 1967. Indeed, the Congress Party lost power in what is now Tamil Nadu in 1967 and has never again formed the government by itself in that state. However, in the vast majority of states, India's combination of numerous political parties, and a first-past-the-post, single-member-constituency, electoral system, means that since 1967 a single party running alone often loses to a candidate supported by a multi-party alliance, and a single party by itself normally does not get a majority in the provincial legislature which would allow it to form a single party government.

As long as the above conditions exist in a parliamentary context, and as long as state and federal elections are held, and offices and appointments flow from electoral results, there will be strong incentives to form multi-party electoral coalitions.⁶⁸

Surprisingly, this proposition holds even for coalitions that combine polity-wide parties and parties that would seem to be potentially separatist regional parties. But, and this is the crucial point, the mutual electoral benefit of coalitions can only be

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 291.

⁶⁸ See the article on political parties in this volume by E. Sridharan and his "The Fragmentation of the Indian Party System, 1952-1999: Seven Competing Explanations" in Zoya Hasan, ed., Parties and Politics in India (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002). Also see Balveer Arora, "Negotiating Differences: Federal Coalitions and National Cohesion" in Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava, and Balveer Arora, eds., Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.176-206.

obtained if both the potentially separatist regional parties and the polity-wide parties adjust their behaviour (and votes) to make the alliance possible.

The incentive system of this type of electoral bargaining is the following. A polity-wide party would be severely constrained against entering into an electoral alliance with a territorial nationalist party, which articulates, or is widely believed to harbor, secessionist ambitions, because it would be attacked throughout the rest of India by polity-wide parties for contributing to the “disintegration” of India. For its part, a regional cultural nationalist party would be severely constrained against entering into an alliance with any polity-wide party that voted in the federal legislature for the imposition of assimilationist policies, because it would fear losing votes to other cultural, or even territorial, nationalist parties.

Tamil Nadu in 1971 illustrates the complex electoral and policy trade-offs that can make an apparently cultural nationalist “regional” party, in effect, “centric-regional”, and a “polity-wide” party, in effect, supportive of regional cultural nationalism. Let us explore this complicated, but absolutely crucial, aspect of Indian federalism.

By the late 1960s the Congress Party had split into a Congress (R) faction led by Indira Gandhi, and a Congress (O) faction. The Tamil cultural nationalist parties had also divided into the DMK and another group that later became the ADMK in 1972. Congress (R) was primarily interested in how it did in the federal Lok Sabha elections, and the DMK was primarily interested in how it did in the Tamil Nadu state assembly elections. Both the Congress (R) and the DMK felt they would be greatly helped in forming a strong government in their respective spheres of greatest interest if they could work out an electoral alliance. In the end Congress (R) agreed in 1971 not to compete against DMK in state assembly races but to form a DMK-led coalition. Even though the DMK-Congress (R) coalition only won 53 percent of the votes, they won an overwhelming 78 percent of the seats to the state assembly. The alliance thus meant that

the DMK won strong control over the political arena most vital to its goals, the provincial legislative assembly.

In return, the DMK agreed to help the Congress (R) by not running against them (and urging their followers to support them) in selected federal seat constituencies where Congress (R) could, with DMK support win more federal seats, and also by supporting Congress with DMK votes in the Lok Sabha. Due to this agreement of non-competition and mutual support, the Congress (R)-DMK alliance won a total of 35 out of 39 Lok Sabha seats. The DMK won 25 seats and Congress (R) won the 10 constituencies where the DMK agreed not to run a candidate. Furthermore, in the federal lower chamber, the DMK lent its 25 votes to Congress (R) on all key issues such as bank nationalization and budgets as long as it did not hurt its power base back home in Tamil Nadu. Thus, this alliance meant that the Congress (R) was significantly strengthened in its most important arena, the lower house of the federal centre, the Lok Sabha.⁶⁹

Barnett succinctly captures the reinforcing incentives by which the leading cultural nationalist party in Tamil Nadu - indeed then in all of India - became what I would call a “centric-regional” party deeply integrated into the federal political system.

“Although the DMK alliance with Indira Gandhi’s Congress (R) seems paradoxical, given previous DMK separatist tendencies, it is in fact consistent with DMK priorities and cultural nationalist orientation. In analyzing DMK political activities and policies on the national level, it is essential to remember that the primary party priority was consolidation of their state-level base.

After the November 1969 Congress party split, a unique opportunity was created for the DMK to enhance its national image, improve relations with the centre, and most importantly, consolidate its state support base by linking itself to the left-leaning economic and social policies of Indira Gandhi.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The 1971 election was not an exception but a precedent. Since 1977 the DMK has had to compete with a spin-off party, the ADMK. In the vast majority of these elections since 1977 one or both of these once Dravidian parties have been in alliances with non-Dravidian, polity-wide parties.

⁷⁰ Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

Since 1971 the DMK has been solidly “centric-regional.” Given the coalitional incentive system I have just described, even the DMK’s major cultural nationalist competitor, the ADMK, routinely enters alliances with polity-wide parties, so it too, is subject to the same “centric-regional” incentive system.⁷¹

Tamil Nadu: 1968-: Cultural Assimilation No, Political and Career Integration Yes

By 1968, Tamil-speaking India controlled a major political entity of India named after the Tamils(Tamil Nadu) and administered that state in Tamil. There has never been any cultural nationalist assimilation into Hindi speaking India in Gellnerian or Millian terms. As we have seen there is a strong intellectual and political body of opinion that is worried that such “cultural conquests” will go down the slippery slope toward “territorial nationalism,” and eventual violent demands for separatism and independence.

In the Tamil Nadu case however, we have seen that many cultural nationalists, such as students and lawyers, who sparked off the 1965 anti-Hindi movement also had material interests in maintaining access to All India-wide political, administrative, and

⁷¹ In March 1998 the ADMK entered into an alliance with the Hindu nationalist BJP party. But, if the BJP actually advanced a strong version of its Hindu nationalist agenda which might privilege Hindi to the detriment of Tamil, the ADMK, to protect its culturalist nationalist flank in Tamil Nadu, would face growing pressures to protest, or even to leave the alliance at the center. A similar process of mutual constraint seemed to be at work in the alliance between the Sikh-led Akali Dal Party and the BJP in the Punjab. However, if the BJP privileged Hinduism in the state of Punjab, the mutually benefiting ruling alliance in Punjab (1997-2002) whereby the BJP helped the Akali Dal get a majority in the Punjab state legislature, and Akali Dal helped the BJP keep its razor thin majority in the all important federal lower chamber, would have become increasingly fragile. Likewise, if the Akali Dal became in any way separatist or semiloyal to the state of India the Hindu nationalist BJP would have come under great pressure to break its alliance with the Akali Dal, or to engineer a leadership change in the Akali Dal. For the 1997 and 2002 state assembly elections in the Punjab and coalition politics see Ashutosh Kumar and Sanjay Kumar, “The Recent Assembly Elections in Punjab: Some Reflections on Results and Changing Voter Preferences”, International Journal of Punjab Studies, Vol. IX, No 1 (Jan-June 2002):113-135 and Satapa Lahiry, “Ethnicity, Party System and Coalition Politics in Punjab in 1990s”, Punjab Journal of Politics, Vol. XXVI, No I, (2002):29-44.

legal careers.⁷² Tamil businessmen also had interests in continued access to the Indian common market. However, if their cultural nationalist demands regarding a separate political state with its own language had been thwarted, if English had been eliminated as a link language for the Indian federation, and Hindi imposed as the sole official language of the federation as a whole, cultural nationalism might easily have begun to merge into territorial nationalism as it did in Sri Lanka. Even as late as 1965, if the centre had insisted on Hindi-only cultural assimilation, no provincial government would have supported it because, in the words of the Madras based observer Forrester, “No Madras government could in present circumstances make the study of Hindi in schools compulsory and survive.”⁷³ But, once the centre renounced the goal of Hindi dominance in the federation, English de facto accepted as a permanent link language, and the Tamil language made secure as the language of regional power, virtually no key Tamil leaders ever again spent major resources on the goal of achieving independence and a separate independent country. In fact, in terms of the definitions advanced earlier, Tamil India remained deeply multi-cultural, but was no longer “politically robustly multinational.”

Barnett administered a poll in Tamil Nadu to DMK and Congress party activists in 1968. Of the 459 local DMK party leaders who were asked the question: “What do you consider the most important problem in your district?”, only 2% mentioned issues of language as the first problem, and none mentioned independence. Of the thirty eight members of the DMK General Council who were asked about their reasons for being active in the DMK movement, none mentioned Tamil Nadu separatism as the first

⁷² For Catalan and Scottish separatists it is probably important to say that the variable of maintaining access to “polity-wide” markets and jobs is becoming less of a disincentive to separatism because of the virtual certainty that as an independent country they would rapidly join the common market of the European Union. No potential separatists in India currently have any comparable compensating market alternatives if they leave India. India is their common market. Thus, Narendra Subramanian, writing about Tamil Nadu, correctly asserts that “the material interests of many core DMK supporters were not directly linked to secessionism”. See his *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization*, p.313.

⁷³Forrester, “The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965”, p. 34.

reason, but 7.8 per cent did mention Tamil language and culture, and 10.5 percent mentioned the two-language policy.⁷⁴

In this context, worries about cultural nationalism, or threats to integration, were not salient even for the 120 state-level Congress party leaders interviewed in Tamil Nadu. Indeed, in 1968 only 2.5 percent listed as their first worry “threats to national integration.”⁷⁵ The responses to these questions, by both DMK and Congress party activists, are further support for my overall argument that a potential issue of separatism in Tamil Nadu, had by the early 1970s, become a non-issue.

⁷⁴ Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India, pp. 203-205.

⁷⁵ Ibid.