

## Chapter 1

# Language Policy and National Development in India

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Language differences in complex multicultural societies raise a number of intriguing questions regarding the role of public policy in ensuring fair treatment of cultural claims and group rights. The fairness problem is particularly complicated in developing democracies due to challenges associated with the formative stages of authoritative institutions and political consolidation. The history of language policy in India is illustrative in this regard, offering important insights into the process of multicultural national construction in a democratic setting.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the role of India's public policy in dealing with the claims of different language communities in terms of their implications for national as well as regional development. The efficacy of language policy in developing countries is usually judged by its impact on national unity.<sup>1</sup> This is an unfortunate reflection of the centralist bias that drives theories of homogenizing nationalism to deprecate differentiated community claims.<sup>2</sup> This study, however, seeks to ex-

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1. Different perspectives on the relation between language and national development are presented in, for example, J.A. Fishman, C.A. Ferguson, and J. Dasgupta, eds., *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (New York: John Wiley, 1968); W.R. Beer and J.E. Jacob, eds., *Language Policy and National Unity* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985); and B. Weinstein, ed., *Language Policy and Political Development* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1990). Several chapters in these comparative volumes deal with India.

2. The homogenizing bias is discussed in C. Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity," in J.A. Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 191–218; and B. Parekh, "The Incoherence of Nationalism," in R. Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 295–325.

plore the connections and complementarities between differentiated cultural rights and democratic national development.<sup>3</sup> Its evaluation of the relative efficacy of India's language policy is based on judgments at both the national and subnational levels. This multilevel approach is particularly warranted in India's case because its constitutional design weaves together democracy and federalism in a complex institutional system that promotes national development as well as cultural rights and regional autonomy.

Independent India began with a nationalist agreement on the importance of reconciling the language sentiments of the country's major regional communities. At the same time, the importance of replacing the colonial language of administration—English—with an indigenous language was also generally recognized. The constitutional provision for the choice of Hindi as India's official language was carefully balanced by an allowance to keep English as an official language until non-Hindi speakers were willing to remove it. India's "official" language issues were complex. The Hindi-English controversy unfolded mainly at the federal level. Every state in the federation had the right to select its own official state language. Because many languages were spoken in most of India's regions, the constitution's framers wisely made special language provisions for large concentrations of minority-language speakers within regions.

These efforts, however, did not prevent the eruption of dramatic episodes of contention and even occasional violence over language issues. At the federal level, the issue of ending English's status as an official language was explosive during the mid-1960s. Hindi leaders' haste in attempting to make their language the sole official language enraged many non-Hindi leaders. The situation in Tamil Nadu turned violent for a brief period in 1965. The opposition was repressed in less dramatic ways in other non-Hindi states. By 1967 it was agreed that the dual-language policy would continue for federal business. The issue of regional language autonomy—expressed in terms of demands to redraw state boundaries along language lines—also took some dramatic turns beginning in the 1950s. Fortunately, these policy crises were temporally and territorially staggered, and these disquieting episodes never added up to a national crisis.

The creation of linguistically defined states in India was not a panacea, however. The rules of autonomy and group rights were frequently

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3. For a case for differentiated rights, see W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), especially p. 26ff.; and a critical essay by B. Walker, "Modernity and Cultural Vulnerability: Should Ethnicity Be Privileged?" in Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism*, pp. 141–165.

violated by the leaders of regional movements when they came to power. These same leaders often cared much less about language use—in schools, for example—than their dramatized devotion to community and culture appeared to suggest. Yet there is also an interesting story of strengthened democracy and increasing political mobility in class terms that is rarely captured by studies that stress the disruptive aspects of ethnolinguistic contention. These are some of the aspects of the Indian case that this study seeks to consider and clarify.

To limit the scope of this study, I focus on the following themes. Some basic features of the language situation in India are discussed to frame the landscape of communities, loyalties, and identities as well as realignments over time. Problems of analyzing the relevant connections and political transitions between language loyalty and organized demands are explored at the national, regional, and subregional levels. The objective is to examine the interactive relations between the associations and movements engaged in representing language communities or coalitions, on the one hand, and government authorities, on the other. A look at a series of episodes reveals the degree of institutionalization gradually attained by the policy system and its capacity to serve a multicultural society.

The domains of language policy can extend widely in a country as large and diverse as India. In this chapter, I concentrate first on the policy problems concerning the relative official status of contending languages at the national level.<sup>4</sup> This is followed by an analysis of language demands at the regional level and their connection with collective autonomy issues ranging from regional self-governance within the federation to separatism and secessionism. Another important dimension of language policy is the mode of collaboration among federal, state, and substate authorities directed toward the systematic development of language resources for generating communicative capabilities within and across language communities. This aspect highlights the special importance of minority language rights within regional state boundaries.<sup>5</sup> If the list of topics is long, its gains become apparent when we study these aspects as important elements of the interactive policy system involving changing authorities and publics over time. The linkages in the system

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4. Various types of “judicial status” of speech communities are discussed in H. Kloss, “Notes Concerning a Language-Nation Typology,” in Fishman, Ferguson, and Dasgupta, *Language Problems of Developing Nations*, p. 79ff.

5. See T. Skutnabb-Kangas, “Linguistic Diversity, Human Rights, and the ‘Free’ Market,” in M. Kontra, R. Phillipson, T. Skutnabb, and T. Várady, *Language: A Right and a Resource* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), pp. 187–222.

emerge from the constitutionally warranted processes of democratic federalism that determine the procedures of pursuing language rights and their policy treatment.<sup>6</sup>

This overview provides a useful context for understanding the role of language politics in the Indian policy system. It may be instructive to treat language politics largely as one mode of democratic representation of cases for recognition, mobility, reduction of group disadvantage, and inclusion. The advantage of a long view is that most of the movement's leaders, including many of the secessionists, have progressively become part of the government. Political opportunities for change, adjustment, and negotiation, as well as incorporation, have progressively legitimized the relevant policy system.

Finally, this account seeks to demonstrate that there is more to language policy than merely processing demands as they come along. Deliberate and anticipatory public action to develop language resources, and their planned use to promote social capability and the cultural status of relevant communities, may deserve special notice in a policy setting that has apparently inherited the political culture of the Indian nationalist movement.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Linguistic Setting*

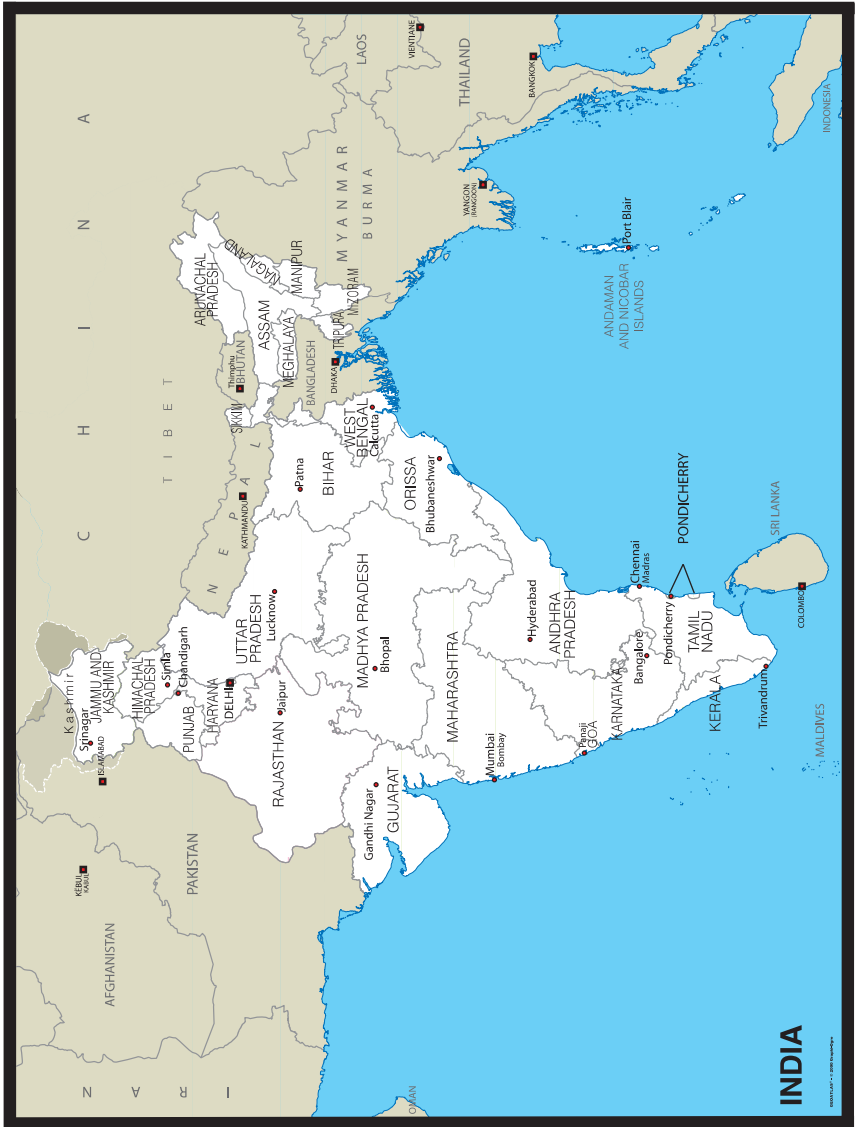
It is not easy to define the language situation of any multicultural society marked by a complex multiplicity of languages, dialects, sociolects, and other variations associated with speech communities.<sup>8</sup> Even a simple head count of mother-tongue speakers may not be easy because the definition of "mother tongue," as in the case of Indian census data, may vary from one enumeration to another. Other decisions, such as the choice of criteria of enumeration, may significantly affect the data on language of identification. India's 1961 census mentioned 1,642 languages;

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6. These are discussed by E. Annamalai, "Language and the Indian Constitution," in R.S. Gupta, A. Abbi, and K.S. Aggarwal, eds., *Language and the State* (Delhi: Creative Books, 1995), pp. 24–27.

7. See J. Dasgupta and C.A. Ferguson, "Problems of Language Planning," in J. Rubin and R. Jernudd, eds., *Language Planning Processes* (The Hague: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 3–7.

8. Problems of describing the "language situation" are discussed in, for example, C.A. Ferguson, "National Sociolinguistic Profile Formulas," in W. Bright, ed., *Sociolinguistics* (The Hague: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), pp. 309–324. See also J.J. Gumperz, *Language in Social Groups*, papers selected by A.S. Dil (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1971), pp. 1–76.



in 1971 the figure reported was 221, and in 1981 it dropped to 106.<sup>9</sup> The numerically based distinction between major and minor languages can also be arbitrary in most countries, including India. However, most accounts of language situations use these categories along with one called “special languages,” implying some hierarchy. India accords a special status called “scheduled languages” to 18 languages, including 12 that also qualify for the label “major.” The other 6 scheduled languages account for less than 1 percent each of the total population.<sup>10</sup> Sanskrit as a classical language of prestige was included in the latter group, although it represented a negligible number of users.

Among all the languages in India, Hindi enjoys the highest numerical advantage.<sup>11</sup> Although it accounts for nearly 40 percent of the total population (1991 census), Hindi apparently needs wider support from other language communities to assume a leading position in national communication. No other language comes close to its numerical standing. (See Table 1.1.) Bengali (8.2 percent), Telugu (7.8), Marathi (7.4), Tamil (6.3), and other languages follow rather remotely in numerical strength. But a combination of some of these languages could hope to successfully challenge any unwarranted move for Hindi domination. Their countervailing strength offers a valuable assurance in favor of multicultural balance.<sup>12</sup> Relative proportions, however, need to be placed in proper contexts to yield reliable information about the meaning of language difference for policy purposes. Hindi itself is a composite name that covers a wide linguistic area, including hundreds of communities whose members are historically accustomed to reporting their linguistic identity by other names.<sup>13</sup> How these names are socially and politically recognized depends on factors that go beyond intellectual debates on the choice of labels such as “language,” “varieties of language,” or “dialects.”

Decisions made by the federal census authorities in India can make a big difference in determining the definitions, boundaries, and strength of a language such as Hindi. Thus where the 1961 census, using a narrow

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9. See L.M. Khubchandani, “The Eighth Schedule as a Device of Language Engineering,” in Gupta, Abbi, and Aggarwal, *Language and the State*, especially pp. 34–35.

10. For detailed discussions of the scheduled languages, see the collection of papers in *ibid.*, especially B. Mallikarjun, “The Eighth Schedule Languages,” pp. 61–83.

11. Hindi, with nearly 500 million speakers in India and abroad, is the third largest language in the world.

12. See J. Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 33ff.

13. See H.R. Dua, “Hindi-Urdu as Pluricentric Language,” in M. Clyne, ed., *Pluricentric Languages* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), pp. 381–400.

**Table 1.1. Language Distribution in India.**

Language	Percentage	Main Concentration
Hindi	39.85	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh
Bengali	8.22	West Bengal, Tripura
Telugu	7.80	Andhra Pradesh
Marathi	7.38	Maharashtra
Tamil	6.26	Tamil Nadu
Urdu	5.13	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh
Gujarati	4.81	Gujarat
Kannada	3.87	Karnataka
Malayalam	3.59	Kerala
Oriya	3.32	Orissa
Punjabi	2.76	Punjab
Assamese	1.55	Assam
Kashmiri	0.46 <sup>a</sup>	Jammu and Kashmir
Nepali	0.25	West Bengal, Sikkim
Sindhi	0.25	<sup>b</sup>
Konkani	0.21	Goa
Manipuri	0.13	Manipur
Sanskrit	0.01	<sup>b</sup>

SOURCE: Center for Monitoring Indian Economy, *India's Social Sectors* (Bombay: CMIE, February 1996), pp. 101–105. For Hindi through Sindhi, see Government of India, *India, 1999* (Delhi: Government of India, 1999), p. 17.

<sup>a</sup>Approximate.

<sup>b</sup>Stateless.

definition, arrived at a figure of 30 percent of the total population for Hindi, a much broader concept pushed the figure to nearly 38, 39, and 40 percent in the 1971, 1981, and 1991 censuses respectively. (See Table 1.1.) At the same time, another national organization sponsored by the same federal government recognized some varieties of Hindi as literary languages.<sup>14</sup> The power of policymakers to categorize and enumerate in ways that serve them has had a major impact on the politics of recognizing the differences among Hindi, Hindustani, and Urdu.<sup>15</sup> These three,

14. L.M. Khubchandani refers to the case of Maithili and Rajasthani treated as “varieties” of Hindi for census purposes but recognized by the Sahitya Akademi (Literature Academy) as “literary languages.” See Khubchandani, “The Eighth Schedule as a Device of Language Engineering,” p. 35.

15. The use of categorization and enumeration as modes of control and domination is discussed in A. Appadurai, “Number in the Colonial Imagination,” in C.A.

according to most scholars, are varieties of the same language. Hindi and Urdu are marked by a shared grammar and common core of basic vocabulary, though at the high end of learned use their lexical choices tend to diverge.<sup>16</sup>

Historically, in various uses, the term “Hindustani” came to represent a common area between the two. In the precolonial era, Persianized Urdu enjoyed the support of Muslim rulers. Early British rulers sought to polarize Hindustani along distinctly different lexical lines by making Hindi purge Persian words and pushing Urdu closer to Persian style.<sup>17</sup> Independent India’s language policymakers elevated Hindi to be the official language of the federal and several regional governments. Hindustani was ignored.<sup>18</sup> Urdu’s status became problematic. The situation was further complicated by political movements that advocated the use of languages and specific styles to serve religious mobilization for political purposes. The active role of political authorities and institutions in influencing the course of language identification, loyalty, differences, and possible contentions should be a reminder that it may be misleading to treat language interests as merely exogenous social or ethnic inputs for public policy.

### *Political Recognition and National Assurance*

Intellectual concerns for language, including sophisticated treatments of phonology and grammar, have long been a part of India’s cultural tradition. Literary works dating to about 600 B.C. bear testimony to such sensitivity.<sup>19</sup> The subcontinent became home to a gradual diffusion and interpenetration of many languages belonging to the Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Aryan, Sino-Tibetan, and Austric speech families. Differences of

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Breckenridge and P. van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 314–339.

16. As H.R. Dua has put it: “Hindi and Urdu are grammatically almost identical . . . and they show some differences in their lexicon and in minor aspects of syntax.” Dua, “Hindi-Urdu as Pluricentric Language,” p. 390.

17. See M.A. Siddique, *Origins of Modern Hindustani Literature, Source Material: Gilchrist Letters* (Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh: Naya Kitab Ghar, 1963), pp. 17–42.

18. Mahatma Gandhi’s strong advocacy of Hindustani appeared to work before 1947, but with the partition of the country his adversaries were victorious. Hindi narrowly won over Hindustani during the Constituent Assembly proceeding dealing with the official language issue. See Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development*, pp. 136–137.

19. S.K. Chatterjee and S.M. Katre, *India: Languages* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, c. 1970), pp. 208.



language and culture became a normal part of the area's history. More than 2,000 years of interaction also helped to evolve certain significant resemblances.<sup>20</sup> This long passage to similarities has been frequently overlooked by those who tended to confuse difference with distance and insularity. Political observers favoring homogeneity as a nationalist value were too disturbed by the wide variety of languages to undertake any patient examination of common elements. Many perceptive linguists, however, were impressed by the common elements and had little difficulty in defining the subcontinent as a single linguistic area.<sup>21</sup> The historical processes of borrowing, among other things, across the major families of languages (subsuming most people of the area) clearly led to a cumulative emergence of common elements over a long period of time.

The modern emphasis on difference was promoted by the colonial administration in using all manner of diversity to highlight the improbability of overcoming social division. Even more than an aversion to multiplicity, there was also a colonial sense that indigenous languages were associated with poor communication quality; thus English was elevated to the highest rank for official, educational, and other modes of communication. But the colonial rulers never made the mistake of assuming that the regional variety of English gaining currency in India would be anything but substandard.<sup>22</sup> If a desire to dominate made the colonial rulers impose English on India, however, it was a desire to displace that domination that ironically impelled the first-generation leaders of the nationalist movement to demand the introduction of English for higher education and scientific work.

Leaders such as Ram Mohun Roy were persuaded that educated bilingualism (English for Western exposure and Indian languages for general communication) held the best promise for leading the process of national development. Roy, remembered for establishing English schools with his own resources about two decades before the official colonial introduction of English (1839), is also regarded as the father of Bengali prose.<sup>23</sup> Many such leaders were proficient in several languages. They in-

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20. Ibid., p. 10.

21. For a discussion of South Asia as a linguistic area, see M.C. Shapiro and H.F. Schiffman, *Language and Society in South Asia* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), pp. 116–149; and M.B. Emeneau, "India as a Linguistic Area," *Language*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1956), pp. 3–16.

22. For examples of disparaging comments made by English observers, see B.B. Kachru, "English in South Asia," in T.A. Sebeok, *Current Trends in Linguistics*, Vol. 5, *Linguistics in South Asia* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), especially pp. 627–628.

23. See S. Cromwell Crawford, *Ram Mohan Roy: Social, Political, and Religious Reform in Nineteenth-Century India* (New York: Paragon, 1987), p. 119ff.

creasingly became convinced of the compelling need for multilingual preparation, to enable a wider range of communication to reach larger segments of the multicultural society. Rather than stubborn hindrances, language differences were seen as opportunities to gain communicative competence to serve more regions. Aiding recognition of the plural base of the nationalist project was of course the fact that the leadership of the nationalist associations and their respective constituencies were unmistakably multicultural. Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, and other language-community leaders of the early phase of nationalism evidently needed an accommodative and inclusionary ideology and institutional system as much for their own mutual assurances as for national mobilization.

There was no single community of overwhelming size, and the resulting politics of multicultural accommodation fashioned by liberal nationalists turned out to be a source of strength and durability for the Indian National Congress. Beginning with its founding in 1885, it cautiously cultivated regional language communities and their resources for its sustenance and growth. To the best of such a large organization's ability, it set up codes of institutional conduct that ensured consensual decisions and regional autonomy.<sup>24</sup> The desire of the regional languages communities to manage their affairs was given a practical trial in 1921. The provincial units of the Congress were reorganized along language lines<sup>25</sup>—a bold move for its time. It put a premium on the notion of Indian unity as a democratic process of coordination of nationally nurtured regional sentiments and interregional collaboration.<sup>26</sup> But it also created a certain unease among some modernizing leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, who had apprehensions about the divisive implications of regional aspirations.

### *Language Status and Conciliative Policy*

This survey of the long evolution of India's secular nationalist political culture suggests that the makers of language policy in independent India began with a valuable institutional resource. The framing of the Indian

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24. B. Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), p. 75ff.

25. S. Chitnis, "Towards a New Social Order," in B.N. Pande, ed., *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress (1885–1985)* (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee, 1990), p. 370. At the same time, the importance of the regional languages in national and provincial communication was recognized by the organization.

26. See C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationalism in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), especially p. 116ff.

constitution was crucially aided by the overwhelming majority of the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly. The partition of the subcontinent strengthened the role of the party in crafting a federal system marked by an absence of profoundly divisive expressions of regional interests.<sup>27</sup> There were disagreements, to be sure, but the flexible opportunities for change appeared to assure the contending advocates of language-based interests that the institutional rules were not arrayed against the differentiated rights of regions or cultural groups. The conciliative tone of the language provisions of the constitution, not surprisingly, reflected an important institutional inheritance that may be significant for an understanding of the conflict over the relative status of languages and the policy outcomes in the formative years of the nation and later.

Given the multiplicity of languages in India, it was not easy to choose a language such as Hindi, with a plurality of 40 percent, as the national language. But the concept of official language at the union (federal) government level was considerably narrower in scope.<sup>28</sup> As a result of sensitivity to the sentiments of the non-Hindi language communities, Hindi was constitutionally allocated the role of federal language only for official and formal communication.<sup>29</sup> English continued to be used as an authorized associated language, subject to periodic renewal by parliament. The proceedings of the Supreme Court and high courts, and bills and acts for either house of parliament, were permitted to be in English.<sup>30</sup> The constitution adopted in 1949 was in English. The Hindi version was authorized, after a long delay, in 1987. In case of any divergence of meaning between the two texts, the Hindi version would be subject to revision.<sup>31</sup>

During the past five decades, there was rarely massive discontent at the federal level from either Hindi or non-Hindi blocs. In 1965 there was a brief moment of grave apprehension, mainly on the part of some southern anti-Hindi organizations, that the use of English as an associate lan-

27. These founding moments of agreement are discussed in G. Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), p. 186ff. Austin has discussed the working of the federal provisions in his *Working a Democratic Constitution: The Indian Experience* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially p. 565ff.

28. An official language is for governmental, administrative, or formal state-related communication for the specific level of government (federal or regional). A national language may refer to much wider ranges of national communication.

29. Article 343. See *Constitution of India*, with selective comments by P.M. Bakshi (Delhi: Universal Law Publishing, 1998), p. 270.

30. Article 348. See *ibid.*, p. 271.

31. See D.D. Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, 1999), p. 391.

guage was about to be withdrawn. Some inept and hasty moves by the federal government clearly justified these apprehensions.<sup>32</sup> Public agitation and the subsequent response from the federal policy authorities led to stronger legal and political assurances that restored the multicultural balance.<sup>33</sup> The interactive process that brought about the solution involved negotiation among several political parties of different cultural and ideological persuasions at both federal and regional levels. The larger among these parties derived support from a number of language communities. Like the ruling Congress Party at the federal level in 1965, some of the opposition parties, irrespective of their stand on the Hindi dominance issue, were not inclined to take uncompromising positions for fear of losing support from diverse bases.<sup>34</sup> This compulsion to compromise based on the very nature of multicultural support proved to be highly beneficial for maintaining the conciliative and institutional system, even at moments of extreme stress.

Federal language policy, however, should be placed in the wider context of regional policy concerning the official language of states in the union. In India, life for most people takes place in the regional states, with little reference to what goes on at the federal level. Communication among the rural population in West Bengal, for example, hardly calls for any language other than Bengali. Out of twenty-five states in the union, with the exception of six Hindi-speaking states, most states have a similar situation in relation to their regional language. The status of official language for the major regional languages may be of greater importance for the people of all these states, including the Hindi-speaking states.<sup>35</sup>

This offers political assurance to the regional language communities that their languages enjoy a constitutional standing and an autonomous political space of dignity. The official language policy for the states as specified in the constitution is somewhat different from its federal counterpart. The states “may” adopt “any one or more” of the languages in

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32. These and related developments are discussed in Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development*, p. 236ff.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 255ff.

34. In fact, the most stressful moments for the policy system were contributed mainly by the rigidities of parties that had only a single language-community support base. See *ibid.*, pp. 257ff.

35. Indeed, because the Hindi states, on average, have lower levels of literacy and urbanization, the importance of regional Hindi or even some varieties may be more relevant. In general, for most of the states, the overwhelming importance of agriculture and rural life is likely to call for a greater relevance of regional languages, official or otherwise.

use in the state or Hindi as the official language or languages.<sup>36</sup> (At the federal level, this clause is phrased as an imperative.) But this flexibility may be useful in allowing the political recognition of minority languages within the states. Many states in the federation contain many languages and cultures, so that in different areas of a state there may be a need for special functional recognition of a language's importance for education and administration. This substate recognition, limited in area and function, needs to be distinguished from a statewide status for a second official language in response to the demands of a large minority group.

Some interesting issues of national allocation of status were raised by the framers of the Indian constitution when they included a list of fourteen languages (subsequently expanded to include eighteen [Table 1.1]) that Indian leaders and official documents have treated as "national languages" or "major languages," or otherwise given an honorific national status.<sup>37</sup> The list includes Hindi and other languages of the major speech communities of the country. It also includes a classical language, Sanskrit, which is rarely spoken, and Sindhi, which is not connected with any state in particular. Six of the included languages account for less than 1 percent each of the nation's population. Some unlisted languages such as Bhili and Santali claim more than four times the speakers than Manipuri (a listed language) claimed in the 1991 census.<sup>38</sup> Most of these listed languages are also regarded as official languages of states, though a few are not. The criteria for inclusion or exclusion are confusing; what is clear is that access to the privileged list is influenced more by political support than either numbers of speakers or the literary heritage of a language.

Together the national languages account for more than 96 percent of the population. Inclusion in this recognized category brings a number of benefits besides national prestige to these languages and their speakers. These languages are supposed to be sources from which Hindi might draw elements for its development and broadening, to serve as a composite language for a wider range of communication. In practice, moves in this direction have yielded little.<sup>39</sup> The expectation that a broader ver-

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36. Article 345. See *Constitution of India*, p. 271.

37. The *Report of the Committee on Emotional Integration* concedes these languages the "status of national languages" (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1962), p. 51.

38. B.H. Krishnamurti, "Official Language Policies with Special Reference to the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India," in Gupta, Abbi, and Aggarwal, *Language and the State*, p. 15.

39. For a negative appraisal, see D.P. Pattanayak, "The Eighth Schedule: A Linguistic Perspective," in *ibid.*, pp. 49–55.

sion of Hindi would gradually serve as a “link language” has not been realized. The language development programs funded by the federal government have nonetheless been beneficial for all specially recognized languages. In any event, the national recognition seems to reflect multicultural sensitivity and access that may be counted as a joint gain for the communities and the policy system.

### *Language Loyalty, Regional Identity, and Political Autonomy*

Language differences or language loyalties are not likely to pose problems for national policymakers unless there are compelling campaigns to use them in public spaces for realizing certain community objectives. Language as a sign of identity enjoys certain advantages in multicultural India. Unlike religion, India’s major language groups often have regional distribution that yields an easier negotiating ground for autonomy claims.<sup>40</sup> In India some regional languages extend over a population size or territory that matches that of the larger states of the world.<sup>41</sup> This extension can enable language to play the role of a unifier of smaller subregional groups divided by caste, religion, faction, or location. The idea that language is primarily divisive in a multicultural society often prevents an appreciation of its strategic integrative role within broad regional boundaries.

For example, leaders of the nationalist movement used language as a resource for mass mobilization against colonial rule and discrimination. From the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a network of voluntary associations in different regions of India campaigned for the use of Indian languages for newspapers, general publishing, and instruction in schools.<sup>42</sup> The leaders of these associations had their own political and cultural differences, but they all seemed to agree on the need to promote a sense of pride in regional languages, as opposed to the colonial language. At the same time, many of them were eager to popularize one or another Indian language as a link for interregional communication and national mobilization.

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40. Hindu, Muslim, and Christian groups are dispersed across most of the regions and languages of the country. The Sikh community is mainly Punjabi speaking, but Punjabi speakers are distributed over a number of religious groups. In prepartition India, as in contemporary Pakistan, most Punjabi speakers were Muslims. Urdu is spread over a wide variety of regions. Hindi is spoken over six contiguous states.

41. Uttar Pradesh, one of the Hindi-speaking states, alone claims a population of 139 million (1991 count).

42. Note the roles of the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj movements in different regions of India.

Contrary to the presumption of the academic literature about what is often dismissively called “linguism,” many prominent leaders from non-Hindi regions favored elevating Hindi to a national role.<sup>43</sup> Many Bengali writers and administrators working in Hindi-speaking Bihar were distressed by the colonial mistreatment of Hindi in the area. Their initiative led to the introduction of Hindi in the law courts and schools of Bihar by the closing decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Later, the support of B.G. Tilak (Marathi) and Subhas Chandra Bose (Bengali), and above all the relentless efforts of Mahatma Gandhi (Gujarati), significantly strengthened the case for Hindi’s national role.<sup>45</sup> But this multicultural support for Hindi came with the expectation that it would widen itself to reduce the stylistic distance from the Hindustani and Urdu varieties and be receptive to influences from other Indian languages.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the problems of defining Hindi’s composition, the promise of breadth allowed the language to become independent India’s federal official language.

Equally interesting was the preindependence nationalist movement’s recognition of autonomy rights for language communities within a democratic federal constitutional system. As the moment of independence came closer, there was lessened agreement about how to put this recognition into policy practice. Fortunately, the constitutional provisions relevant to autonomy issues were left flexible. The burden of deciding the degree of autonomy that would be acceptable to both regional representatives and national policy authorities was left to an interactive system of negotiation legitimated by the basic design of the federal system. The federal government was supposed to play an important leadership role consistent with the transitional needs of a developing polity. The partition of

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43. They included Kashub Chandra Sen of Brahma Samaj and Dayananda Saraswati of Arya Samaj, who were (mother tongue) Bengali and Gujarati speakers respectively. For different uses of the term “linguism,” see G. Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon, 1968), p. 87; and R.J.L. Breton, *Atlas of the Languages and Ethnic Communities of South Asia* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira, 1997).

44. See N.K. Bose, *Modern Bengal* (Calcutta: Vidyo Daya, 1959), p. 81.

45. See L.K. Verma, ed., *Hindi Andolan* (Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1964) (in Hindi), pp. 23, 32, and passim. See also M.K. Gandhi, *Thoughts on National Language* (Ahmedabad, Gujarat: Navajivan, 1956), pp. 3–4.

46. In fact, it was more than just an expectation. Article 351 of the constitution makes it “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 the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating . . . the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule.” *Constitution of India*, p. 273.

the country and the extensive disorder associated with this traumatic event called for the primacy of order in a new India after 1947. But this stabilizing imperative, fortunately, did not allow the federal government to dictate the time or the terms of reorganization of the constituent states.

Some leaders such as Nehru were more concerned with central administration guidance than the logic of nurturing regional community resources to develop a system of voluntary allegiance to build sustainable unity.<sup>47</sup> The ruling Congress Party, despite its early endorsement of regional autonomy, asked for moderation when reorganization demands were made in the early founding years. But it did not prevent—though it could have—the constitution from giving the parliament enough formal powers to reorganize the states.<sup>48</sup> The colonial legacy of princely states, and the arbitrary organization of major provinces that lumped together language and cultural communities, placed a heavy burden on the postindependence federal system in India. There was widespread recognition of the need for administrative reorganization.

The idea of reorganizing the entire territory into regional communities based on cultural identity and solidarity—mostly expressed in terms of language—seemed to make eminent sense in most parts of India with a territorial concentration of population associated with the major languages. Each of these regional language areas, however, also contained large minorities, some of which were connected with majorities in other states.<sup>49</sup> In some small states, the population was highly fragmented in terms of language identity, but cultural ties or tribal affinity could be expected to offer some sort of base for political unity.<sup>50</sup> In other words, even assuming all the reasonableness of language or cultural ties as a basis for forming autonomous communities, some significant ambiguities persisted. Despite the popularity of cultural autonomy claims, and the justifications advanced by cultural activists, such claims were rarely

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47. Nehru's reservations are discussed in R.D. King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 108–109.

48. Articles 3 along with 2 and 4 of the constitution read together with the fundamental rights would suggest that the reorganization powers are extensive and that democratic demands for reorganization are legitimate. See J. Bondurant, *Regionalism versus Provincialism: A Study in the Problem of Indian National Unity* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of International Studies, 1958), p. 27.

49. Consider, for example, the connection of Bengali speakers as minorities in Assam with the Bengali majority in the state of West Bengal.

50. For example, in the case of some smaller northeastern states such as Nagaland, the leading Ao language (in number) accounted for only 13 percent of the population; it was followed by Sema with 12 percent and Konyak with 11 percent (1981 census).



judged in terms of the problems of hegemonic domination and homogenizing propensities of the dominant groups.<sup>51</sup>

### *Regional Language Communities and State Reorganization*

Responding to the demands for the reorganization of states along the lines of language communities was not easy. The ruling Congress Party leaders cautiously attempted to use expert committees to lend a measure of legitimacy to a policy of indefinitely delaying the process of conceding autonomy.<sup>52</sup> Although the party had a comfortable parliamentary majority, it needed to create an impression of conducting policy matters of wide multicultural significance in a nonpartisan manner. At the same time, the domination of leaders such as Nehru within the party was used to keep the regional party units in line and to make sure that dissidents did not form any alliance with the opposition parties that wanted to expedite reorganization. But language loyalties proved to be a grand resource for the opposition parties to use to build popular coalitions for large-scale autonomy movements.

By 1951, for example, a strong movement for the formation of a separate Andhra state for Telugu speakers gained ground. There was so persuasive a case for separating Telugu speakers from Tamil speakers in the massive Madras state that even Nehru had earlier conceded it.<sup>53</sup> The opposition parties that led the successful movement for a new state in 1953 had national as well as socialist credentials. The lapses of the Congress Party and the ruling policy system did not push the movement to exclusivist ethnic separatism or secessionism. Instead, the use of a broad-based movement to correct the policy incompetence and leadership lag at a crucial phase in the development of a federal system contributed to reconstructing the policy system. Moreover, when the new state was enlarged in 1956 to include the Telangana area to form Andhra Pradesh, some interesting socially integrative dimensions to language movements for autonomy were revealed.<sup>54</sup> In this case, the language movement brought

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51. A perceptive discussion of these problems is in Walker, "Modernity and Cultural Vulnerability," especially p. 145ff.

52. For a concise history of the reorganization process, see B. Chandra, *India after Independence* (New Delhi: Viking, 1999), pp. 98–130.

53. Nehru had stated in late 1947 that the Andhra demand was "perfectly legitimate." Later he changed his mind after some wavering. See King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India*, p. 108.

54. A useful account of the pertinent developments is offered in P.R. Rao, "Post-independence Era," in C.S. Rao, ed., *History and Culture of the Andhras* (Hyderabad: Telugu University, 1995), pp. 139–148.

together Telugu speakers of all social levels of Madras and Hyderabad in a large community of cultural and administrative unity.

There was increasing evidence that this movement, based on language loyalty, was able to progressively incorporate lower-status groups in the political process. The mobilization of peasant groups was of course facilitated by radical leaders of communist and socialist groups. Within two years, successive elections (1955 midterm and 1957) helped the Congress Party to return to power. In the course of these electoral battles, the Congress Party was able to cut into the peasant support bases of the communists and their allies and head for a new and broader alignment of forces in favor of the country's largest and oldest national political party. The gains of the language movement thus helped to deepen democratic processes. These inclusionary policy successes and the responses they evoked from public institutions do not reflect the tone of the alarmist literature of ethnopolitics or ethnofederalism.<sup>55</sup>

Andhra's achievement of statehood based on language was followed by a wave of demands for autonomy by other language communities. Once again, the first policy response was to set up a body of experts to "dispassionately" examine reorganization issues. The leaders of the federal government were eager to tame community passions by letting experts remind civic leaders of the virtues of economic and administrative rationality within existing state boundaries. The States Reorganization Commission was appointed in 1953 to make recommendations regarding broad principles used to determine reorganization and also to suggest lines along which particular states were to be reorganized.<sup>56</sup> The commission worked for two years, holding public hearings and considering thousands of memoranda and other evidence to get a fair sense of public opinion. It was an occasion for a massive communication of community sentiments for autonomy and cultural recognition. Although conceding a general recognition of the linguistic principle, the commission's report also stressed administrative and economic efficacy as a rationale for reorganization of the states. The report did not please many groups, but it

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55. But the indications tend to accord with the definition of policy success offered by M.E. Brown and Š. Ganguly, eds., "Introduction," *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), p. 14. For conventional simplifications, see G. Smith, "Mapping the Federal Condition," Smith, ed., *Federalism: The Multiethnic Challenge* (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 1–28. For the incorporation process in Andhra, see R. Reddi, "The Politics of Accommodation: Caste, Class, and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh," in F.R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds., *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 280–281.

56. *Report of the States Reorganization Commission* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1955), pp. i–iv.

gained parliamentary approval for the main recommendations, with some modifications, and was duly implemented. There were fewer problems with the new map in the south and the east. Punjab was unhappy; people in the western part of the country were outraged.

The leaders of the Maharashtra and Gujarat autonomy movements deeply resented the denial of the linguistic principle in reorganizing the Bombay state that contained these large communities. Extensive protest movements supported by opposition parties and some sections of the ruling Congress Party continued for several years. Episodes of violence in 1956 tended to draw attention from the fact that movements enjoyed widespread popular support, including from groups and classes of different ideological persuasions. By 1960 the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat were conceded. Later they turned out to be the most successful industrial states in India. Meanwhile the popularity of the Congress organization was restored. In 1966 Punjab and Haryana joined the list of states. Extensive reorganization in the northeast followed in 1971. The mix of language and culture here was of a different order. Three new states were approved in 2000.<sup>57</sup> The major language-related reorganization of states seems to have been realized, with a map of twenty-five states and seven Union Territories including Delhi, with a special status of capital territory. Twenty-five or even twenty-eight states, however, for 1 billion people may not seem too many, and it may even suggest that the reorganization and the autonomy processes have not yet come to an end.

### *Privileged Majorities and Minority-Language Rights*

Regional language communities using newly acquired rights of self-governance do not always use their autonomy to ensure fairness in treating minority-language groups. Indeed the very term “linguistic” state may have an unsettling effect on the larger minority-language groups. When administrative boundaries become identified with encompassing language communities, the minorities may tend to feel like resident aliens in their own home states. Their differentiated language and cultural rights may become highly vulnerable under the authority of those whose advocacy of their own rights brought them to power. This political privileging of cultural or linguistically defined communities and authorities raises a special set of problems in a country such as India. Minority-language speakers’ proportions in the population of states range from

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57. The case for three new states—Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Jharkhand—was approved in 2000. This time the major criteria were cultural and administrative.

9 percent in Gujarat to 40 percent in Assam or 47 percent in Jammu and Kashmir, or in a small state in Nagaland, as high as 86 percent.<sup>58</sup>

Defining “linguistic minority” for adequate policy sensitivity or responsiveness can be a complex task. Officially in India, the category refers to people whose mother tongue is different from the principal language of the state, and at the substate level different from the principal language of those levels.<sup>59</sup> The nested nature of minority status at various levels in the same state makes policy processes difficult. Several constitutional provisions seek to enunciate safeguards for minority-language groups. These aim to ensure the right to conserve their language, script, and culture; the right to have educational institutions of their choice; a procedure for official recognition of a language when necessary; the provision of facilities for instruction in a mother tongue at the primary stage; and other safeguards.<sup>60</sup> The commissioner for linguistic minorities is charged with keeping track of the policy action in these areas. Reports issued by the commissioner indicate that despite some serious efforts made in most states regarding conservation of languages, recognition for official transactions, and provision of language facilities for instruction, there is still a long way to go to create reasonable minority assurance. Occasionally, judicial decisions have aided the policy process.<sup>61</sup>

The provisions of these decisions are complex and the authorities for implementing them are often confusingly multiple. A successful nationwide minority rights system calls for intricate systems of cooperation among federal, state, local, and interstate institutions such as the state Chief Ministers’ Conference or Zonal Councils. Minority input in the policy system is also complicated by the fact that minority languages in one state may enjoy majority status in another. In West Bengal, Hindi is the leading minority language, but it is a majority language in six states. Bengali is spoken by 20 percent of Assam’s population, where Assamese is spoken by about 60 percent. The resource advantage of such large and well-connected minority languages may be compared with the smaller and more localized minority languages such as, for example, Tulu in Karnataka.

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58. For details, see Government of India, *The Twenty-ninth Report of the Commission for Linguistic Minorities in India, 1988–1989* (Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh: Government of India, 1991), p. 109ff.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

61. See, for example, the Supreme Court case of *D.A.V. College vs. State of Punjab* (1971). See E. Annamalai, “Language and the Indian Constitution,” in Gupta, Abbi, and Aggarwal, *Language and the State*, p. 25.

Urdu is a major language, ranked sixth in numerical standing in the country. It is endowed with a rich literary tradition and a historical connection with both the north and the south, but most of its mother-tongue speakers lack commensurate official recognition because they are dispersed as minorities in more than five states. Urdu has the status of second official language in Bihar and some special status in two other states, but the sense of disadvantage is pervasive.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, Urdu is the official language in Jammu and Kashmir, despite the fact that less than 1 percent of the population in the state reports it as their mother tongue.<sup>63</sup> The major language of the state is Kashmiri, which is spoken by 53 percent of the population. Only a curious mix of religion and politics can explain how, in this case, the concepts of majority and minority can be made to change places.

### *Collective Alienation and Resistance to Multicultural Union*

Political perceptions of minority status may lead language communities to seek a variety of modes of collective action. The range of choice would depend on the definitions of the situation used by community activists and the opportunities provided by the national policy system as well as options offered from abroad. Yet in a country such as India, no one can escape minority standing by mere redefinition.

India's democracy offers a built-in incentive for painting individuals or communities with all kinds of identity colors, some permanent but others mutable. Is Hindi really Hindustani, or is the latter really Urdu? When does the Assamese language movement include Hindus and Muslims, and when does it exclude the latter?<sup>64</sup> The politics of variability of identity depending on community activists' strategic needs may have a lot to do with how community alienation or affection is generated. Language or divisions can serve as negative or positive resources for the federal system, depending on how democratic opportunities are used or abused by combative or cooperative participants.

The Tamil autonomy movement in Sri Lanka has been gradually pushed to a point of violence that now threatens the entire state. India

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62. See, for example, I. Farid, "Urdu at the Mercy of Masters," and several other chapters in S. Singh, ed., *Language Problem in India* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997), especially pp. 84–97.

63. See Government of India, *The Twenty-ninth Report of the Commission for Linguistic Minorities in India, 1988–1989*, p. 22.

64. For the changing perception of Muslims and the convenient use of terms designating them as "foreigners," see M. Kar, *Muslims in Assam Politics* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1997), especially p. 370ff.

has the largest Tamil population in the world. In the 1950s, a separatist movement led by some Tamil-language community leaders invoked the symbol of Dravidian regionalism to mobilize a mass movement against the Hindi policy of the federal government. They urged the people to burn the national flag as a symbolic act of resentment.<sup>65</sup> The younger members of the movement, however, were more interested in pursuing their notion of Tamil autonomy through participation in the democratic electoral system.<sup>66</sup> The older authoritarian leaders were unable to prevent the movement from seeking state power to serve the community. At the same time, their aspirations to mobilize all four of the Dravidian language communities to go against the federal system failed. Within a few years, the democratic leaders of the Tamil movement became valuable partners in building national cohesion and development. From the 1960s onward, the regionalist leaders, as successors of the original Dravidian movement, organized the leading political parties in the Tamil area. The history of the DMK and the AIADMK, despite their differences, has been one of lending crucial support for the federal system through four decades.<sup>67</sup> One may look back and wonder if the divergence of the course of Tamil autonomy politics in Sri Lanka and India may have something important to say about India's conciliative federal system.

At this stage, it may be useful to distinguish between the system-resisting and system-supportive expressions and actions of the participants of the language- and region-based movements. The system-resisting actions need not be viewed as alienating in the long run. Their effect may be, in many cases, too localized or of too short or intermittent duration to impair the overall efficacy of the system. Even if not, there is no historical evidence to rule out the possibility of effectively using institutional means of disalienation to restore allegiance to the system. Fortunately for India, language demands or movements by themselves have not been strongly associated with secessionist violence to the extent of seriously disturbing national stability or development.

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65. See R.L. Hardgrave Jr., *The Dravidian Movement* (Bombay: Popular, 1965), p. 45ff.

66. R. Thandavan and S. Swarnalakshmi, "Dravidian Movement and Participative Democracy," in G. Palanithirai and R. Thandavan, eds., *Ethnic Movement in Transition* (New Delhi: Kanishka, 1998), pp. 52–53.

67. The DMK stands for Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; its major spinoff organization is known as the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). In early 1999, the federal coalition government did have problems with the AIADMK, but the reference here is to the federal system as a wider institution. Even those problems were compensated by the important support lent by the DMK to the coalition government following the thirteenth general elections held later in 1999. See S. Dasgupta, "Government Formation," in *India Today* (International Edition), October 18, 1999, pp. 14–16.

Most cases of strong separatism or secessionist violence have been associated with cases where the activists have made use of a convenient assortment of symbols of disaffection, such that the relative salience of each could be manipulated at will. Thus in the northeast in the 1950s and 1960s (Nagaland and Mizoram) or in the north in the 1980s and 1990s (Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir), there were careful concoctions of elements of disaffection based on ethnicity, religion, territorial affinity, cultural distinctiveness, and language. The strategic virtue of insurgence is that it blurs the borders of specific elements such that policy planners seeking to redress grievances can always be kept guessing.

Separatism and secessionist violence arose in Punjab in the 1980s and Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s. Factors of region, religion, and language were blended in Punjab in ways that were not always easy to clarify from outside. Before the partition, the Sikh community constituted only 13 percent of undivided Punjab's population. After 1947, with a Hindu majority, Sikhs comprised 33 percent of reconstituted Indian Punjab's population. Muslim separatism leading to partition had already segmented Punjabi ethnicity into two parts. Within a few years, a language movement for Punjabi speakers' autonomy split the state.<sup>68</sup> The new smaller state of Punjab created in 1966, with a 61 percent Sikh and 37 percent Hindu population, provided a new springboard for a religion-based separatist movement. The transitions from Punjabi ethnicity to Punjabi language identity, and further on to exclusive Sikh religious identity, raised the question of how much room was still left for identity shedding or switching. But religious mobilization in favor of separatism did not make much headway so long as political peace served as a context for democratic elections at the state level. Nationally committed Sikh leaders succeeded in winning the highest percentage of votes in all of the five state legislature elections under the secular banner of the Congress Party before 1985.<sup>69</sup> The Akali Dal, the exclusively Sikh political party, had to wait for its day of clear victory.

Politics in a peaceful phase brought out the internal differences of the

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68. The language issues at this time involved a dispute regarding the status of Hindi and Punjabi for official and educational purposes and the choice of scripts for Punjabi. The Akali Sikhs wanted Gurumukhi script, while the Hindu organizations wanted Devanagari script. The common tradition of writing in Perso-Arabic or Urdu script for Muslims, Sikhs, or Hindus was forgotten. See Chandra, *India after Independence*, pp. 325–328. For a linguistic analysis of the problem of defining Punjabi, see K.C. Bahl, "Punjabi," in Sebeok, *Current Trends*, pp. 153–200.

69. See P. Wallace, "Religious and Ethnic Politics: Political Mobilization in Punjab," in F.R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Vol. 2 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 416–481.

Sikh community. Class, caste, occupation, and other vertical distinctions allowed linkages to be developed across religious lines. But militant separatist forces using purist religious symbols employed sophisticated firepower to beat their opponents with conspicuous violence. This was not, however, a simple battle between regional ethnoreligious forces and secular federal policy authorities of the Congress Party. Instead it was an unfortunate reflection of a three-way contest between moderate Akali forces, armed militant separatists, and Congress Party leaders who were not averse to using the militants to corner non-Congress moderates. This was the case where the federal policy authorities, in effect, undermined the system in Punjab as much as the separatists. Federal military action in 1984 made things worse. For six years, violence claimed thousands of civilian lives. Separatism had little more to offer despite its pipeline of resources based on the remote-control nationalism associated with a segment of the Sikh diaspora. By 1992, however, vertical differences caught up and cut through the horizontal confessional solidarity. Democratic alternation of power among parties and close linkages with the federal system returned.<sup>70</sup> The peaceful processes of regional development and national collaboration that earlier earned the state the reputation of excellence in developmental performance continued. By 2000 the Akali leadership of the state remained a partner of the ruling coalition of the federal government.

The story of separatism and secessionism in Jammu and Kashmir does not seem to belong here, largely because the language component is not a major problem in the secessionist definition of the situation. The external military involvement and imposition of wars and subversion also introduce a different twist to policy analysis. The state leaders' choice of Urdu as the official language and their neglect of Kashmiri, spoken by a majority of the population, says something important about their political and religious logic. This is the only Muslim-majority state of the federation. The non-Muslims' (36 percent) sense of insecurity is such that this is also the state with the largest population exodus.<sup>71</sup>

Minority-language safeguards and protections are not available in Jammu and Kashmir. Even the majority language, Kashmiri, which has a long literary tradition cutting across different religious communities, does not have the rights that minority languages enjoy in most states. The leaders of the state have always been Muslims, and autonomy issues

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70. For the major episodes, see Chandra, *India after Independence*, pp. 328–338. The authors also note that of the nearly 12,000 killed by the militants in the state during 1981–93, “more than 61 percent were Sikhs.” *Ibid.*, p. 338.

71. See T.N. Madan, *Pathways* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 201.



have generally emphasized the rights of the religious majority. Both the secessionist and the nonsecessionist leadership have either ignored or downplayed the cultural bond of *Kashmiriat* (Kashmiriness) that, for centuries, served as a common source of pride for different language- and religion-based communities.<sup>72</sup> Unlike other states in India, this state has the distinction of having a separate constitution for its administration.<sup>73</sup> This special autonomy of the state apparently facilitates a policy of denial of language rights of nearly half of its population. Regional autonomy, in this case, seriously contravenes the basic principles of multicultural citizenship.

The seamy side of regional autonomy is frequently concealed by the generally valid acceptance of the case for self-governance within the federal system in India. Space does not permit a review of many other cases of regional language communities endangering or suppressing sub-regional autonomy. A large part of the separatist and secessionist episodes of militant alienation and violence in the northeast can be traced, for example, to Assam's language policy. This strengthened the authority of the Assamese speakers in the state in a manner that scared the other language communities. Before independence, Assam was a victim of colonial manipulation of boundaries that changed the demographic pattern of the province several times. Assamese-speaking Hindu leaders of the Brahmaputra valley gained a new sense of confidence in 1947, following the transfer of a large segment of Bengali-speaking Muslims to eastern Pakistan (later renamed Bangladesh). These Assamese leaders always resented the prominence of the Bengali language and people (mostly Hindus after 1947) in education, administration, and employment.<sup>74</sup>

The new Assam, after 1947, witnessed a strong move on the part of these leaders to impose their dominance on all segments of the state's population, including Bengali Hindus and Muslims and the speakers of tribal languages. The numerical majority of Assamese speakers was thin and fragile and made many Assamese leaders nervous.<sup>75</sup> The ruling Con-

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72. Even a sample of personal names, particularly surnames and nicknames, would show a greater degree of sharing among the major religious communities than in many other parts of India. For a discussion of this aspect, see O.N. Koul, "Personal Names in Kashmiri," in Koul, ed., *Sociolinguistics* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1995), pp. 145–166, especially p. 166.

73. Article 370 of the Indian constitution includes some special provisions with respect to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. For the history and analysis of the special status of this state, see Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, pp. 249–258.

74. See Chandra, *India after Independence*, pp. 307–308.

75. In part, this majority was obtained by Muslims of Bengali origin declaring themselves as Assamese speakers for political purposes in the 1951 census. See S. Baruah,

gress Party leaders were less agitated than the young activists who were eager to use a militant mass movement to make Assamese the exclusive official language of the state. The movement used extensive violence. In 1960 the legislative assembly of the state passed the Official Language Act making Assamese the official language “for all or any” purposes of the state.<sup>76</sup> Suddenly, Bengali and tribal-language speakers found themselves at a great disadvantage. Their perception of unilateral imposition disturbed the multicultural unity of the state. The Assamese leaders used the term “foreigners” or “outsiders” to describe any minority group they did not have political use for at any specific moment. The federal government tried to use its influence on the state leaders, but the fears and resentments of the minority-language communities and the militant reactions of the activists only increased. The activists were further aided by a large influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The 1970s and early 1980s witnessed widespread political disorder and extremist mobilization against democratic institutions.

Fortunately, the federal government was willing to negotiate with the radical activists of the state, many of whom were organized in the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and the latter’s electoral victory in 1985 restored the institutional system. Another group of activists, however, remained on the radical fringe. Ironically, in recent years it is the ruling AGP that has been a major target of secessionist and separatist terrorism, while it worked in close collaboration with the federal government.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile the tribal communities of the hills of Assam, with the active assistance of the federal government, have been reorganized as states. Despite some continuing acts of separatist violence in Nagaland, these areas (including Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh), after gaining recognition as autonomous states, have become important parts of the federal institutional system. The transition of Nagaland and Mizoram from a high incidence of separatism to system-supportive national participation is indicative of the disalienation possibilities of multicultural policy. In these and other states in the northeast, however, cultural sensitivity for their own minorities remains low. Even in Assam, a large-scale movement for the cultural and linguistic autonomy of the Bodo plains tribal community serves as a reminder that the internal politics of cultural recognition and language rights within states need serious attention.

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*India against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 97.

76. For the relevant sections of the text, see V.R. Trivedi, *Documents on Assam*, Pt. A (New Delhi: Omsons, 1995), pp. 139–142.

77. This was particularly true in the first half of 2000. The AGP lost power in 2001.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed language policy in India as an institutional process set in the context of a developing democracy striving to nurture a multicultural sensitivity. It has pointed to continuities in the policy culture that evolved during the secular anticolonial nationalist movement and after. The layering of this system at the federal, regional, and sub-regional levels has been emphasized to avoid common oversimplifications. Language policy belongs to a special class of policies that deals with cultural recognition, political intervention, and productive coordination for national development. Little prior experience, in India or abroad, was available to guide India's policymakers. Trial and error and interactive learning based on negotiations with policy publics were the best aides to policy planning that the ruling authorities could muster.

Fortunately, even the worst instances of secessionist terror often proved amenable to inclusionary treatment, as for example, in Punjab, Assam, and Mizoram. Policy successes in these areas involving careful processes of disalienation have received considerably less scholarly notice than isolated episodes and transitional phases of violence. My analysis shows how the "seething cauldron" view of destructive conflict stemming from language, culture, or ethnic claims can be highly misleading.<sup>78</sup>

The successful allocation of relative status to different languages for official use at the federal and regional levels indicates conciliative patterns that represented quite an accomplishment for a country of India's complexity. How the interaction between language-based demands for autonomy and the policy authorities at the federal level led to a responsive system of reorganization reveals a constructive policy narrative of vast dimension. It tells us how meeting different demands at different times and dispersed spaces helped policy planners to gradually realize the goal of inclusion. This vast scale of management of autonomy demands reinforced the institutional resilience of the political system. The process was, to be sure, facilitated by the very structure of Indian cleavage patterns: Major social cleavages in India often intersected or crosscut each other.

The simultaneous pursuit of planned investment of resources for nationwide development of economic, cultural, and language-related benefits helped to connect the communities with the federal system in a

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78. That it can be misleading for many cases in other settings as well is discussed in R. Brubaker, "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism," in Hall, *The State of the Nation*, especially p. 281.

partnership that proved highly productive. Language planning, for example, involved a nationally coordinated project for the development of Hindi and other regional languages along with a selected set of tribal languages. A wide range of material was produced by the federal- and state-level agencies in collaboration with nonofficial organizations in the fields of scientific and technical terminology. Texts in the sciences, arts, and humanities were presented across radio, television, and satellite telecast systems, opening new public access, especially to nonliterate. The social deepening effects of such expanded communication would indicate a productive aspect of language policy and politics rarely captured by studies that concentrate on conflict management.

The sensitivity of language policy to issues of fairness among language communities went far beyond language status and balanced investment in the corpus development of major languages. For example, in the 1960s a three-language formula was adopted by a joint initiative of the Chief Ministers' Conference for use in secondary education for teaching language. The formula included, with some exception allowed, teaching a regional language; Hindi or another Indian language in Hindi areas; and English or any other modern European language. The idea was to ensure equality of language learning among communities. It was not easy to get all states to follow the formula. Gradually, however, resistance to the formula declined, even among most of the southern states. But the Hindi states opted for Sanskrit rather than southern or other regional languages, and Tamil Nadu opted for Tamil and English only. Mizoram also chose Mizo and English. All other states made serious efforts to respect the formula in the interest of using indigenous languages for wider national communication.<sup>79</sup>

Language policy in India, instead of playing the presumed role of weary fire fighting in a country of incendiary language rivalry, has performed an unexpectedly reconstructive function. With every success of conciliative treatment of language demands, identity complementarities have been encouraged. The Andhra movement's successful national incorporation marked the inauguration of inclusionary institutionalism that encouraged, to cite just one example, the complementarity between Telugu, Indian, secular, or other identity labels. It is not surprising that on many occasions when the federal government was in crisis in the late

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79. In fact, the Hindi states' reluctance to learn other Indian languages has been a problem for ensuring fairness in other areas. For example, the rate of bilingualism among Hindi speakers has been the lowest in the country. See D.L. Sheth, "The Great Language Debate," in U. Baxi and B. Parekh, eds., *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1995), pp. 205–206.

1990s, it was the regional parties—including one from Andhra Pradesh—that proved to be crucial for national stability.<sup>80</sup> If these were some of the finest moments of the inclusionary sensitivity of national development in India, they also called attention to the credit that language policy deserves for making regional communities the core of the nation. But the region-nation relation in a multicultural society reveals only one of the many levels of operation of language policy. In fact, success in achieving reasonable coherence between the regions and the national political center would tend to call greater attention to those aspects of language policy that language-community leaders are rarely tempted to talk about.

These issues relate to the development of languages as valued community resources for enabling citizens of a developing country to attain greater communicative competence. Language politics in India rarely methodically attends to the problems of language competence, cultivation, and management issues because there is no ready promise of political dividend in these mundane policy areas that lack public attention.<sup>81</sup> Regional languages, once elevated to official status, may be less often actually used or promoted for new functional roles than one would expect from the rhetoric of language loyalty. The use of regional language for graduate education, to take one example, has been sponsored by federal financial assistance since 1968. Some regional governments produced a lot more with similar subsidies than others. In terms of original book production for regional language use for graduate study, one of the best records (in terms of number of books for the same grant amount) was claimed by Kerala for Malayalam-language works. Some of the worst records were seen in the case of the Hindi states.<sup>82</sup> The languages enjoying the limelight of reorganization politics and autonomy movements, as in the cases of Marathi and Punjabi, also fared poorly by this measure.

Civic attention needs to be drawn to the productive aspects of language policy. The distributive aspects of language policy—reflected in the inadequate resources allotted to regional language or minority-language schools in different states—also need more attention than what

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80. For a discussion of the growing importance of coalition politics and its connection with Indian diversity, see B. Arora, "Negotiating Differences: Federal Coalitions and National Cohesion," in F.R. Frankel, ed., *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 176–206, especially p. 200.

81. Some of these aspects are discussed in B. Jernudd, *Lectures on Language Problems* (Delhi: Bahri, 1991), pp. 14–46, 69–78.

82. For details, see B. Mallikarjun, "The Eighth Schedule Languages—A Critical Appraisal," in Gupta, Abbi, and Aggarwal, *Language and the State*, pp. 78–79.

the regional or federal policy authorities have given so far. The increasing globalization of the mass media in India and the growing trends of liberalization in television programming, with a special emphasis on the regional markets, may compensate for some of the governmental lapses. Yet even if this trend brings about some change in promoting the production of regional language resources or the use of languages of wider communication (Hindi, for example), it is doubtful that it would aid the distributive process. The autonomy, identity, and allegiance issues of language policy probably still claim too much attention to allow the deeper issues of equity in a poor country to gain the public notice they desperately deserve.