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India and the Soviet Model: The Linguistic State Reorganization and the Problem of Hindi

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Introduction

This essay examines how India dealt with the "national" question, and the influence of the Soviet Union on this problem.[1] "Nation" is intended in the Soviet meaning of the term, derived from the continental European one: a nation is a people defined by historically produced characteristics, among which language is paramount, and capable of thinking of itself as such thanks to the efforts of an intellectual and political "vanguard." The nation is thus neither purely objective, nor a pure act of will or "imagination," but a combination of the two; hence a historical phenomenon upon which politics can operate.[2]

As Paul Brass wrote, "Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, especially in the Hapsburg Empire, and the Soviet Union in the twentieth century have provided the closest parallels to India with regard to the multiplicity of cultural groups living side by side, often in conflict with each other and with the authorities in centralizing states."[3] At the beginning of the twentieth century there were 179 languages and 544 dialects in India, while the Soviet 1926 census counted 196 nationalities within its boundaries. In both countries, however, there were no more than 15–20 major and territorially concentrated linguistic groups, a situation similar to that of Europe up to the tsarist borders in the nineteenth century, where such groups numbered fewer than 30.[4]

In both Europe and India, these languages belonged to families that before the emergence of "national" languages had been characterized by dialect continua. And in both cases, tensions between linguistic groups belonging to different families (Dravidian versus Indo-European in India, Hungarian/Slavic/Germanic in Austria-Hungary/Central Europe, Slavic/Turkic/Caucasian in the USSR/Russian Federation) were generally greater than those dividing cognate groups. Exceptions were not wanting, however, as in the Serbo-Croatian or the Russian-Ukrainian cases.[5]

Other key indicators are also comparable: in 1961 India only 24 percent of the population was literate, and 18 percent urbanized, a situation similar to the Soviet situation in 1921, and to the Central, Southern, and Eastern European one in 1848.

The intermingling of languages and peoples often practicing different religions produced another important analogy: in some areas the social pyramid coexisted with language and religious pyramids, and in India with an additional caste pyramid, which intensified conflicts and complicated fault lines, with surprising results.

Of course, Jawaharlal Nehru's India and the USSR also featured remarkable differences:

(1) The former operated under a liberal-democratic system which, while gravitating around a party, was quite different from the Soviet party-state model;
(2) The Indian National Congress (INC; also called Congress) was a federated organization, organized along linguistic lines, and thus very different from the hypercentralized and Russified CPSU;
(3) The role of Russian was substantially different from that of Hindi, which was never a "prestige language," and had a merely numerical preponderance;
(4) India's "regional" languages were much stronger, also in terms of prestige, than Republican languages in the USSR;
(5) Whereas after the 1920s Moscow imposed monoscripturalism, in India multiscripturalism was and is the norm;
(6) Above all, India had English, a language cherished by its elites, which played and plays the superior role that Russian performed in imperial Russia after the nobility abandoned French, as well as in the USSR.

Similarities remain striking, however. Nehru kept the Soviet and Yugoslav model in mind, and Moscow paid special attention to India's "national question."[6] I will explore these issues, beginning with a brief outline of the pre-1947 evolution, and then concentrating upon the linguistic state reorganization of 1954–56 and the subsequent abandonment of the constitutional provision to institute Hindi as the sole national language. Some general remarks on the national and language questions in the light of the Soviet and Indian experiences will conclude the essay.

Background, 1905–1947

British India's administrative structure, which India inherited, was the result of military, political, or administrative exigencies, rather than of rational

policy. British provinces were thus often multilingual and multireligious conglomerates, interspersed with hundreds of princely states that recognized the sovereignty of the British crown. Albeit lacking these states, imperial Russia's administrative subdivisions had a similar origin and complexity, born out of conquests.[7]

In both countries, national and linguistic conflicts began in the nineteenth century and exploded in 1905. The 1905 Russian Revolution brought 1848 to the empire, while Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal along religious lines encouraged both the pan-Indian national movement and local, language-based ones.[8] In spite of strong internal opposition, the INC then sided with the Bengali protests, and in 1908 authorized the formation of a Congress linguistic province in Bihar. The dual nature of the anti-British struggle, which fed the pan-Indian aspirations and identity of the new Indian elite, *and* the aspirations and identities of specific linguistic groups, thus already came to the fore, as happened in the Russian Empire where national and "international" (that is, empire-based) solutions to the imperial crisis were tightly intertwined after 1905.

In 1911 London canceled the partition in the name of the linguistic principle, and soon afterwards World War I accelerated the trends favoring linguistically motivated partitions in both countries. In 1917, the year in which Woodrow Wilson proclaimed his Fourteen Points and Vladimir Lenin called for "self-determination up to separation," the INC backed the creation of linguistic provinces in Sindh and Andhra. The British also moved in the same direction: in 1918 the Montagu-Chelmsford Report recognized the "strong argument in favor of linguistic or racial units of government" that would make it "possible to conduct business of legislation in the vernacular."[9] Two years later, at Nagpur, Mahatma Gandhi convinced Congress to reorganize along linguistic lines, using words similar to those used in Europe in 1848 and in Russia in 1905 and 1917.[10]

Meanwhile the civil war experience and the 1919 Bolshevik defeat in Ukraine pushed Lenin to reverse his 1918 hypercentralistic stand.[11] He started to conceive the project of a nonethnic Soviet Union composed of linguistically based republics with a single, dominant "people," thus de facto following Otto Bauer, who had refuted Marxism's belief in the disappearance of peasant, "non historic" nations as a result of modernization.[12] Initially a supporter of a federal Russia, Joseph Stalin understood the potential of Lenin's idea. In the 1920s he supervised the drawing up of the borders among existing Soviet Republics, as well as the creation of new ones, especially in Central Asia, in a process that continued in the 1930s. This coincided with important ethnographic and linguistic research, which found its expression in the first pan-Soviet census of 1926.[13]

Yet, while the Bolsheviks used Russian, the British-educated Indian leadership spoke English: Gandhi disliked the fact, and in 1926 he sponsored a decision to substitute Hindustani (which he presented as the common basis

for Hindi and Urdu, the two related languages around which Hindu-Muslim tensions had been growing)[14] for English as the language of the INC central organizations. This proposal, however, remained only on paper: Gandhi's own Hindi and Urdu were too poor,[15] Muhammad Ali Jinnah made his pro-Urdu statements in English, and Nehru disliked addressing peasant gatherings because of his halting knowledge of the language.[16] Officially, Nehru followed Gandhi in attacking English as an elitist language of oppression, and in the 1930s he supported the linguistic principle and the use of Hindustani as the national language. However, Nehru also wrote that if one "scratched a separatist in language" one would "invariably find that he is a communalist, and very often a political reactionary," and he showed a strong attachment to English, as well as to a cosmopolitan, rational approach tied to his socialist orientation.[17]

Nehru was introduced to socialism through the Fabian Society in Cambridge, and he admired the Soviet experiment that promised a "future...full of hope."[18] Two points were key: planning-led development and Lenin's nationality policy, which the Bolsheviks formalized in 1923 as "indigenization."[19] In 1929, after visiting the USSR, Nehru published an enthusiastic book titled *Soviet Russia*, in 1946 he praised "the Soviet revolution" for having laid "the foundation of a new civilization," and in 1952 he still saw in "the Soviet republic... the example of a country that has adopted such policy [the encouragement of local languages] with success. Lenin and other leaders in his time [i.e. Stalin] were exceedingly wise in this respect."[20]

Meanwhile the British, spurred by World War I, anticolonial agitation, and the demands of the princes as well as the Muslims for regional autonomy, started to envision a solution to the Indian problem based on a dominion organized along weak federal lines. In 1920 a Chamber of Princes was instituted, and in 1928–30 the Simon Commission discussed federal schemes, cautiously proposing the consideration of the linguistic criterion in the reorganization of provinces. The commission also recommended forming a Boundaries Commission in case it was decided to proceed with reorganization (as the Soviets had done).[21] In 1931 the O'Donnell Committee stated that in case of state reorganization it was necessary to take into account "the wishes of the inhabitants," and in 1935 the *Government of India Act* made provincial autonomy at least partially real, allowing the INC to form a number of regional governments. In 1936 the new, linguistically based Orissa and Sindh provinces were formed,[22] and in 1937 Congress recommended the creation of linguistic provinces in Andhra and Karnataka, to which Kerala was added in 1938.[23]

Autonomy intensified the conflicts between the Muslim League and the INC, which Jinnah denounced as a Hindu body, at a time when World War II strengthened the League's position, due to its decision to support the British war effort. Congress instead boycotted the war effort, and even fought against it under the leadership of its former president Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose,

who saw in the war an opportunity to weaken the British hold on India, broke with Gandhi in 1939 and fled to Germany and then Japan in 1941.[24]

Following the German invasion of the USSR, the Communist Party of India (CPI), which, in spite of Stalin's 1925 statement ("in the case of a revolutionary upheaval in India, many hitherto unknown nationalities, each with its own language and its own distinctive culture will emerge on the scene") had been "wrapped up in the theory...that India was one nation," also started "supporting the Muslim demand for self-determination." The CPI also insisted "upon just boundaries, and put forward plans for a really voluntary and free Indian Union," thus causing the party's ruin in the aftermath of the Partition, in which the CPI was deemed complicit.[25]

The shock of Partition also affected Congress's position on the nature of the Indian Federation and its stand on linguistic reorganization, which it had still supported in the 1946 manifesto, but which, in the wake of Partition, came to be considered as a danger to the unity of the country. Since Congress was organized along federal lines, and therefore could not act as the iron skeleton of a formally loose Federation, as did the CPSU in the USSR, extra powers were granted to the federal government, whose strength was reinforced by the prestige of the national leaders, and by a strong planning commission. A "quasi-federal union invested with several important features of a unitary government" was thus born.[26]

This set the stage for the quick and strong-handed integration of the princely states, inhabited by almost one hundred million people: 216 were merged into existing provinces, 310 were consolidated into six unions, and then integrated in the republic, the Punjab hill states were united into a Himachal Pradesh, while the largest states—Mysore, Hyderabad, and Jammu-Kashmir—were dealt with separately. Vallabhbhai Patel and Vappala Menon, who managed the integration, used criteria such as language and ethnic homogeneity, as well as historical traditions (Menon, for instance, imagined a "greater Gujarat, as a linguistic unit of the Dominion"), but only if it seemed expedient to do so.

However, the integration set important precedents for the 1955–56 States Linguistic Reorganization because it raised similar problems: in 1947–48, too, it was necessary to manage formerly dominant, urban groups, such as Hyderabad's Muslims, or to deal with "aborigens" who profited from the circumstances to reclaim the land of Indian colonists.[27] Above all, as in the USSR of the 1920s, the integration of hundreds of states required adjusting boundaries and exchanging territories; events that, as Menon noted, "often entails much heart-burning and political bitterness," and that a strong and capable central leadership was instead "able to accomplish...without leaving any unpleasantness in its wake."[28]

As for linguistic reorganization, Nehru, Patel, and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari decided it was unthinkable to superimpose divisions based on language

onto those caused by religion. The *Report* presented in December 1948 by the Dar Commission that had been charged to discuss the issue discarded the demands from Andhra, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, stating that the formation of linguistic provinces was "not in the larger interest of India," because there was a danger of creating "sub-nations" and inciting "forces of disruption and disintegration" while the country was in its formative stage. Large cities were indicated as especially dangerous places, and "the redistribution of provinces" was to wait "till India...has been fully integrated."[29]

To address the discontent the *Report* generated, Congress appointed the J.V.P. (Nehru, Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya) Committee. Even though it conceded that public sentiment in favor of language reorganization was overwhelming in some places, such as Andhra, the committee supported the need to "rigorously discourage every separatist and disruptive tendency."[30] As a consequence, in 1951, for the first time, the Congress electoral manifesto did not support linguistic reorganization, and stressed planning instead.

In this climate the Constituent Assembly decided upon language matters.[31] Partition had killed the case for Urdu (which became Pakistan's national language),[32] as well as for Gandhi's Hindustani, which survived indirectly in the definition of Hindi (see below). However, Hindi was fiercely contested and the INC supported it only 78 to 77. According to Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the untouchables' leader, this revealed "how much the South dislikes the North"; opponents of the Hindi choice were later to remember that it was made "in spite of a nearly 50 percent opposition";[33] and the Dravidian south (but also Bengal, etc.) reacted by strengthening English. At the Constituent Assembly, for instance, Tiruvellore Thattai Krishnamachari, from Madras, after recalling that "we disliked the English language in the past," warned that the compulsion "to learn Hindi" would mean that "the strong Centre which we need...will also mean the enslavement of people who do not speak the language of the Centre.... It is up to my friends in U. P. to have a whole-India; it is up to them to have a Hindi-India. The choice is theirs...."[34]

Once the Hindi choice was made, the debate shifted to the role of English and of the key regional languages (listed in the eighth schedule of the constitution,[35] and including Urdu), and to the way Hindi was to be defined. The Hindu faction won on the adoption of the Devanagari script, but lost on digits, and on Sanskrit as the sole "feeder" of Hindi. Moreover, Nehru, who supported the idea that India had an *official*, not a "national," language (for him all India's languages were "national"), succeeded in imposing the first term. The constitution thus spoke of the union's official language, a choice that was later repeated with state languages, declared official, but not national.

Also thanks to Nehru (and to Lenin, whose policies Nehru then repeatedly praised), in matters of language the constitution was thus written "in the spirit of liberalism and catholicity." Citizens possessing a distinct language, script,

or culture have the right "to conserve the same" (art. 29), and linguistic and religious minorities to create and administer "educational institutions of their choice" (art. 30). The constitution also devolved education to the states, and left universities free to choose the language of instruction.

The State Reorganization Commission, 1954–1956

After the constitution's approval, pro-Hindi forces and Hindi-speaking states eagerly started to promote the language and to impose it upon their minorities, Urdu-speaking ones in particular.[36] "Linguism" (linguistic chauvinism) thus grew everywhere, especially among those—such as Tamils and Telugus—who resented the betrayal of the promise of a state linguistic reorganization.[37] As the chairman of the West Bengal Legislative Council Suniti Kumar Chatterji ironically stated, "the example which the Hindi people have set before India (that is 'Our own language before any other') is admirable." They should not have been surprised if others imitated them.[38]

Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi, Gandhi's friend and a supporter of Sanskrit and Hindu culture, also maintained that the rush to replace English with Hindi damaged both national unity and Hindi because, given Hindi's weakness, the vacuum left by English was going to be filled by the stronger and more prestigious regional languages. Premature pro-Hindi policies thus ignited "militant regional linguism, and the linguistic balkanization of India"—that is, India's greatest enemies.[39] At the same time, these policies stressed the positive aspects of English in the eyes of that part of the Indian elite that—while fighting against British rule—sided with Hindi: the opinion Krishnamachari voiced at the Constituent Assembly thus grew more and more popular, especially in non-Hindi regions.

Meanwhile, the 1947 political catastrophe had pushed the CPI to change its nationality policy. At the 1951 election the party campaigned in favor of linguistic states and land redistribution, and won big, especially in Andhra, Kerala, and Maharashtra (in Bengal, instead, as after 1905, the Communists campaigned for a language-based reunification with Eastern Pakistan).[40] Large sections of Congress agreed. In 1955 even Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Gandhi's spiritual successor, declared that "as long as the administration does not run in the language which the *kisan*—the tiller of the soil—understands, he would not and cannot feel or experience the advent of *Swaraj*," words identical to those one finds in the Soviet reports on the Ukrainian peasants' linguistic demands in both 1919 and 1930.[41]

Under these conditions, the pro-reorganization agitation in the south couldn't help but grow, while in Western Punjab the Sikhs demanded a Sikh state. The agitation was strongest among Telugus (a widely spoken language,

with a great literary tradition): after Partition the non-Aryan south thus started to play the role Muslims had played in the Raj before 1947, as Ukraine did in the Soviet Union, where after 1917 it replaced tsarist Poland as the main obstacle to Russian centripetal forces. Petitions, marches, and fasts multiplied. Nehru's electoral appearances in Madras were met with protest, and in the local election Congress gained only 43 deputies, and the Communists 41, out of 145.

In October 1952 Potti Sriramulu, a former member of Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram, started a fast unto death for a Telugu Andhra. On 12 December, Nehru admitted that the Andhra demand should be accepted: "otherwise complete frustration will grow among the Andhras, and we will not be able to catch up with it."[42] On 15 December, however, Sriramulu died, riots spread, and the police fired upon demonstrators.[43] Two days later Nehru declared that an Andhra was going to be formed out of Madras's Telugu districts, and a new state was created in October 1953 (in 1955 Congress scored a spectacular electoral victory there). Pressure continued to build, however, fed by the growing importance, both within and without Congress, of local elites and castes. Profiting from modernization, political autonomy, and independence, these groups desired to have their own state, as attested by the growing conflicts over education and entry into public jobs, or by antibrahminical movements.

In September 1953 Congress reaffirmed its support for a language-based state reorganization, and in December Nehru announced the formation of a States Reorganization Commission (SRC) to examine "objectively and dispassionately" the question of the reorganization of the Indian Union. In private, however, Nehru, and many at the top, were still not "very enthusiastic about linguistic provinces," and confessed that Partition had made them "rather hesitant about changing the map of India too much."[44] They thought that the problems Partition raised, Kashmir included, were still there: there was the risk of provoking serious conflicts; the international situation did "not admit of any dissipation of national energies"; and economic development was the real priority. A new India was thus needed, united by new principles (social betterment, economic development, etc.), and not divided by old values like "religion, community, culture and language."

The commission's supporters maintained that economic development and political stability were hampered by the lack of a reorganization that people recognized as legitimate. There also were huge expectations and hopes: if disappointed, conflicts would greatly increase.[45] The commission was therefore appointed on 29 December, and in February 1954 it asked members of the public as well as public associations interested in the problem to send in "concrete suggestions, supported by historical and statistical data as well as by maps." It was to receive approximately two thousand "well-considered" texts out of more than one hundred fifty thousand documents.[46] The commission also held private hearings, interviewing more than nine thousand people in 104

localities, and presented its final *Report* in October 1955. Three months earlier, in July, the Indian President had appointed—as the constitution required—an Official Language Commission, which was to deal with the linguistic problem from another, equally crucial angle, that of the replacement of English by Hindi.

Not surprisingly, when the SRC discussed existing models of linguistic and federal reorganization the Soviet example figured prominently, also through its Yugoslav "application" (in national matters the Yugoslav Constitution followed the Soviet one). At Bandung, in fact, Nehru became close to Yugoslav leaders who recommended to him maximum tolerance in language questions. They were especially keen to discuss the parallelism between the Hindi-Urdu and the Serb-Croat questions, and stressed the need never to give the impression of promoting Hindi at the expense of other languages, also because "even if we do not directly promote Serbian, Serbian gains ground anyway."[47]

In the commission's *Report* the reference to the USSR and Yugoslavia is direct and positive: only in these countries "has an effort been made to organize units on a linguistic basis," and there exist "adequate constitutional, extra-constitutional and ideological correctives, which could be applied in case any regional loyalties challenge loyalty to the party or to the State."[48] But the commission did not grasp the crucial difference represented by the hypercentralist nature and role of the Communist party in a system in which party organs dominated state ones. In India, in spite of their interpenetration, state structures were not subordinated to party ones, and the awareness of this Indian "limitation" was possibly behind the efforts later made by Indira Gandhi, who knew the Soviet system well, to radically change Congress's nature by centralizing it.

The SRC also possessed the culture needed to look elsewhere: it examined the Swiss case and how the protection of minority interests and rights were dealt with in the constitutions of prewar Poland and Czechoslovakia. It also looked at Canada, South Africa, and Australia, and even examined how the UK dealt with Scotland through the Scottish Standing Committee in the Commons and the secretary of state for Scotland.[49] The advantage obtained from having an elite formed in the British Empire thus came to light. And the Indian Congress ruling group appears as a truly imperial, "superior" elite, capable and ready to see things from above, rather than supporting the expression of a democratic process, as also shown by the admiration its members expressed for their best British predecessors.[50]

As a consequence of the top leaders' anxieties, the resolution that appointed the commission stated that "the first essential consideration is the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India. Financial, economic and administrative considerations are almost equally important.... India has embarked upon a great ordered plan for her economic, cultural and moral progress. Changes which interfere with the successful prosecution of such a

national plan would be harmful to the national interest." (Very similar words were used in the 1920s in the USSR by the representatives of central institutions in their conflicts with Soviet republics.)[51]

In India too, therefore, as in the USSR, "linguistic and cultural homogeneity" ranked second in the list of principles that the commission was called to respect. The SRC, however, interpreted the language criteria as a way to respect "the wishes of the people"—that is, the democratic element, in state reorganization, thus assigning it a central role. In fact, democracy presupposed (1) "that administration is conducted in a language which the people can understand," and (2) a sentiment of identity between government and the population. "Broad-based popular support" could thus exist only in a population united by language, and democracy made it imperative to discontinue what had been possible "under foreign domination" when "different linguistic groups could live together without apparent conflict." The SRC also stressed that the argument according to which composite states taught tolerance was true only "if different linguistic groups were interspersed in these States," which was not the rule in India, where "there is generally a clear-cut integration of different [linguistic] regions in composite States," and where many existing states were already predominantly unilingual.[52]

The SRC conceded that linguistic states could encourage exclusivism and regional nationalism, and stated that the risk increased if the doctrine of reuniting all the persons speaking the same language in just one state was followed. That way, national "homelands" would be created, something the commission opposed because, among other reasons, it would damage the very idea of a single Indian citizenship. Discriminatory practices against internal migrants were thus to be fought against, the more so because Partition had generated millions of refugees who had the right to settle wherever they chose. The SRC shared Ambedkar's theory: the correct solution was *not* the adoption of a "one language, one state" policy (that is, the traditional European doctrine), which would feed conflicts and imperialism; rather the "one state, one language" principle was to be followed, in order to further democracy and participation without nourishing irredentism.[53]

Following, perhaps unknowingly, the Soviet 1920s choice, the commission proposed that districts, not villages, serve as the "basic unit for making territorial readjustments" on the basis of the 70 percent rule: districts were to be assigned to one language (and states and districts declared unilingual) if at least 70 percent of their population spoke that language. Otherwise they were to be considered bilingual or multilingual.

The commission also examined the historical factor and discarded it because of its "potentiality for evil," since "more often than not, every disputed area admitted of more than one irreconcilable claim based on history." Geographical factors and administrative considerations were instead to be given due

attention, and economic ones even more so, also because planning cut across linguistic affiliations and India was to remain one big development area.[54] The argument that administrative units were "made to conform to natural economic regions"—a theory that Soviet planners had supported in the 1920s, referring to Marxism and putting the economy before language[55]—was instead criticized: economic reality was constantly changing, and it was thus difficult to ascertain what a "natural economic region" was. Factors such as the unity of river valleys (the Soviet Dnipro project and the American TVA were the two implicit models) were to be taken into account, but could not be considered decisive. The SRC thus reached conclusions similar to those that Stalin had expounded in *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics* (1950): languages, and peoples, were more stable than economic organizations and social classes. In long-run decisions it was therefore better to rely on the former, without, of course, discarding the latter.[56]

As was the case in Central and Eastern Europe,[57] large multilingual cities—Bombay and Madras in particular—raised some of the most serious problems. In 1953, for example, Telugus coined the slogan "Madras is ours," but in 1956 Tamils took control of the city, which under their leadership became an epicenter of anti-Hindi, pro-English agitation (yet, in 1996 the Tamil Nadu government renamed the city Chennai). Bombay was even more contested. The business community opposed the Marathis' claim to the city, indicating that Marathis were only recent immigrants, and that at 43 percent they did not represent the majority of the population.[58] Marathis retorted with arguments similar to those Stalin put forward in the early 1920s to support allotting cities to nationalities on the basis of their surrounding countryside, this also being the argument Tito used to claim Trieste for Yugoslavia after World War II.[59] In their submission to the SRC the Marathis declared, "The question is not to whom Bombay belongs but the question is where Bombay is. Bombay is surrounded on all sides by Maharashtra," and it was thus "naturally" going to become more and more "Marathized" by immigration from the surrounding,Marathi-speaking countryside. If "deprived of its hinterland"—they added—"its further growth would be impaired." Stressing that Bombay was "essentially a cosmopolitan multilingual city," the SRC, however, refused to "attach it to a purely linguistic province," and proposed forming a Marathi-speaking state without the city of Bombay.

As to the question of the states' size, the SRC rejected the argument in favor of small states because of the close contact that would occur between the population and the administration. "There is a point," the *Report* stated, "beyond which personal touch degenerates into personal rule with all that it implies. The growth of impersonal administration is as vital for the working of democratic institutions as close contact." However, the commission also rejected the formation of a single, huge Hindi-speaking state that would have

endangered the survival of the republic, and it restated its dislike for the 1848 "one language, one state" formula that the USSR had adopted instead, which created a gigantic Russian Federal Republic that dominated the entire union.

Kavalam Madhava Panikkar even proposed splitting the already existing Uttar Pradesh, which included one-sixth of the entire Indian population. Non-Hindi speakers liked the idea, yet the commission voted against the dismembering of an existing, linguistically homogenous state.

West Bengal and the Punjab, severely hit by the Partition, and the tribal peoples represented other thorny issues. Bengalis felt they had been unjustly treated since 1905 (which at least partially explains the local Communists' strength), and claimed border areas in Orissa, Assam, and Bihar. Sikhs demanded a smaller, more homogeneous Punjab, in which they would have formed a majority. The SRC recognized some of the Bengali demands, but rejected the Sikhs' request, maintaining that such a state would have been a Sikh communal state, not a linguistic one. Besides, the commission noted, existing Punjab did not have a language problem since "the Punjabi and Hindi languages as spoken in the Punjab were akin to each other." The problem was that of scripts—Sikh Gurmukhi versus Hindu Devanagari—and Punjabi Hindus disliked the former. The Sikh-Punjab question thus remained open, and was to be the source of great problems in the following decades.[60]

The tribal peoples posed questions equally fraught with consequences. The Adivasis' (Santhal) request to create a tribal state in Bihar was rejected with the argument that it was better to look for an administrative solution of tribal and backward areas. The demand for a tribal hill state in Assam was also discarded, and Delhi decided to meet the Naga demand for independence with repression.

The SRC acknowledged that the tribal people's proposals had some foundations: Tribals viewed the inhabitants of the lowlands with suspicion and distrust, and the two populations were different, as was the level of their economic development. However, it was argued that the tribals' situation and demands were a product of the British "'national park' approach," which consisted in "demarcating the tribal zones and in isolating them...preventing, in particular, immigration from elsewhere in these scheduled areas," to which Christian missionaries were instead granted access. Furthermore, a tribal state would not have been economically viable. The proposed solution was thus to strengthen the "autonomy" of the tribal areas. As in the Sikh case, the problem remained open, and it was made even more acute by Assam's attempts at "Assamizing" tribals, who answered—not solely in the Naga hills—with revolts.

In its conclusions the SRC also proposed to abolish the British-based classification of provinces into three classes, and to replace provinces with states "inherently capable of survival as a viable administrative unit," and organized whenever possible along linguistic lines. Except for Madras, the south did not raise serious problems: the SRC proposed forming four language-based states

(Telugu-, Kannada-, Tamil- and Malayalam-speaking). In the north four big states (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) were proposed; in the east the SRC proposed to leave things as they stood, opposing the creation of a united Maharashtra because of the conflicts around Bombay. Jammu and Kashmir were not touched.

The SRC stressed that while such reorganization would have greatly reduced the problem of linguistic minorities, such minorities would have continued to exist. In fact, if in most new states there was no linguistic minority above 10 percent, and the dominant language was usually above 80 percent, in some states the situation was different, and Punjab remained bilingual.

Table 1. Major linguistic minorities, 1960 borders, 1951 census.

State	Language	Pct.	Language	Pct.
Assam	Assamese	55	Bengali	19
Rajasthan	Rajasthani	70.1	Hindi	21.4
Mysore	Kannada	71.1	Telugu	10.9
Madras	Tamil	82.4	Telugu	11

Source: Weiner, State Politics, 26.

In terms of its effects upon linguistic homogeneity, the Indian States Reorganization can thus be compared to the collapse of the multinational European empires in 1918, out of which national states, including important minorities, emerged.[61] The "national" problem was thus reduced, but also exacerbated. In fact, as the SRC noted, while "multilingual States arrest the cultural growth of linguistic minorities and retard their political and economic development, it is implicit in the very formative principle of a linguistic State that in such State linguistic minorities must be reduced to the status of inferior citizens." Though favoring the formation of linguistic states, Ambedkar added that the position of all minorities within them, lower castes included, could worsen, because these states were going to be dominated by the largest castes. Political majorities could thus hide stable communal majorities, blocking the inclusion of minorities, as happened in interwar Central and Eastern Europe, and therefore minority rights had to be defended. The SRC thus proposed to strengthen the "safeguards for Linguistic Groups," including the creation of a "suitable agency to enforce the rights of linguistic minorities." It also discussed the possibility of instituting a Central Ministry for Minority Affairs, along the lines of those created in Russia or Ukraine after 1917, as well as in some post–World War I European countries.[62]

The SRC knew that the defense of minority rights by such a Central Ministry could lead to the worsening of the minorities' relationships with state governments, and that "no guarantees can secure a minority against every kind of discriminatory policy of a State Government." Nonetheless, it recommended strengthening the right to education in the mother tongue also in state schools, the use of minority languages in the administration, and an adequate presence of minorities in state services; that is, the very principle of Soviet "indigenization."

The commission also recommended that examinations for entry into public services should be available in at least three, and wherever necessary in four languages: the state language, the two Union languages (Hindi and English), and the language of any minority forming at least 15–20 percent of the state's population. The SRC thus implicitly proposed a 3+1 model that ran counter to the 2+1 solution favored by the Official Language Commission (see below). The SRC also stated that the "premature" replacement of English was not desirable, especially in higher education, where its elimination would lead to a weakening of educational standards and research. Besides, English promoted mobility, which was good for India.[63]

The *Report* was well received. Communists claimed victory and denounced the survival of the mixed Bombay state, and supported the formation of a Maharashtra state that included the city of Bombay. Nehru also supported the SRC conclusions, even though he was aware that key, unsolved questions remained in Punjab, Kashmir, Bombay, and other regions. According to Brass,[64] he then adopted a policy that based state reorganization upon four principles:

(1) No secession permitted, and repression of all secessionist movements;
(2) Denial of demands to create states based upon religion (Sikh) and not language;
(3) To oppose the formation of multilingual states unless all major linguistic groups supported this solution;
(4) To deny all demands for a linguistic state, even if the linguistic criterion was clear, unless such demand proved to have popular support.

I would add two other principles:

(5) To oppose monolinguism at the central level;
(6) To follow a "one state, one language," *not* a "one language, one state" policy.

The Soviets, in contrast, first accepted secession in 1918 (Finland, Poland) and later the USSR followed the principles in (1) and (2); they did not give much thought to (3); and did not follow (4) (linguistic states were also created for small nationalities). Above all, the USSR did *not* follow (5) and (6).

India thus followed the principle of Joshua Fishman's *nationism*, concerned not with ethnic authenticity but with operational efficiency and democracy, rather than a *nationalism* based on ethnonational demands, which, following the continental European tradition, Stalin considered the norm.[65] And Stalin used "science" (as he saw it) both in creating and crippling nations, whereas Nehru followed a political approach, instituting a "bargaining" or "cooperative" quasi-federalism.

The SRC proposals were accepted with only a few changes, and in 1956 the government passed the State Reorganization Act, approving the formation of fourteen states. The constitution was amended in December 1955 to ease border changes, and then again in 1957 to hasten the process.[66] In spite of the huge problems raised by the political reorganization of an entire subcontinent, in 1956 everything was done quickly and efficiently, as had been the case thirty years earlier in the USSR. By the end of 1956 India could thus proudly boast the speedy and peaceful solution of a great national problem.

Of course, there remained unsolved problems. Bombay province's survival as a territorially reduced bilingual state aroused the protest of the Congress Party's Marathi leaders. Some, including the Federal Minister of Finance, resigned in protest, and there were Marathi demonstrations and riots in Bombay (twenty-six deaths in January 1956) supported by pro-Maharashtra nationalists, socialists, and the Communists, but also by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Janata Party.[67] In May 1960, however, after years of tensions, the Bombay State was easily partitioned along linguistic lines, giving life to Gujarat and Maharashtra, with Bombay as the capital of the latter. In 1962 the Nagas were granted a state of their own, but this did not stop their quest for independence; in 1966 Punjab also was divided, with its Hindi regions forming the new state of Haryana. As with the Nagas, however, the Sikh question remained unsolved, and would lead to Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. In 1968 the Kannada-speaking Karnataka was born; in the 1970s there was yet another round of state reorganization, especially in the northeast; and in 2014 the new state of Telangana was created, separating the Telugu-speaking inner districts from the coastal ones, as the SRC had recommended.

The Official Language Commission and the Fate of Hindi

The twenty-one-member Official Language Commission (OLC), appointed in 1955, was asked to make recommendations on "the progressive use of the Hindi Language for the official purposes of the Union" and on "restrictions" on the use of English. Its pro-Hindi majority, headed by the president, Balasaheb Gangadhar Kher, supported a model similar to the Soviet post-1932 one, which was characterized by the strong predominance of Russian. Yet, the "Observations"

made by the commission's secretary, Sadashiv Govind Barve, during his visit to the USSR "for a Study of the Language Problem," show that the commission was aware of the crucial differences between the two countries.[68]

Barve toured Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv, and Central Asia as a guest of the Academy of Science in July 1956. In line with Nehru's views, he believed the USSR to be "the most important instance of what is reputed to be a successful tackling of the problems of multilingualism," and praised the increase of literacy and women's education, as well as the boom in the number of schools and universities in underdeveloped regions and languages, as the fruits of the "very liberal and progressive policies" that Lenin had promoted regarding language. Unaware of the ferocious anti-Ukrainian repression that accompanied the 1933 famine,[69] he credited these policies for the spread of Russian in Ukraine. Here, he was told in Kyiv, as a reaction to tsarist oppression "after the Revolution there was a tendency amongst the scholars to...choose pure Ukrainian terms in preference to Russian terms," but Soviet "progressive" policies had rapidly put an end to it.

Barve, however, could not help but take notice of crucial differences: (1) tsarist repression made Russian the language of the country's educated elite, in contrast to India, where English, rather than Hindi, played that role; (2) Russian was unquestionably "the best developed and most advanced of the languages of the USSR," a status not true for Hindi; and (3) numerically the position of Russian in the USSR was much stronger than that of Hindi in India. Russian thus occupied "a position in the linguistic set-up of the USSR much more outstanding than that of Hindi in India."

Barve also noted the "emphasis on the compulsory teaching of Russian from a very early stage," the fact that high-school examinations also had to be taken in Russian, and the strict control exercised by the central government over higher education. And he stressed that "all intercourse between the different Republics and between the Republics and the Union" was in Russian. He thus concluded that the Indian problem was "not similar to, but sharply contrasted to the Russian," and was "obviously far more difficult." Barve, and the commission majority, nevertheless considered the Soviet solution a model, and believed that by tackling language issues "pragmatically" these difficulties could be overcome, pushing Hindi to assume in India the role that Russian played in the USSR.

However, the more than one thousand answers to the questionnaire the OLC prepared, as well as the hearings it conducted, soon reminded the commission of these difficulties. The answers made clear that English still was "the common medium of administration at the higher levels in all the States of the Union..., the language of legislation both of State Legislatures and of Parliament and the language for the administration of justice in all the Courts of the country."[70] English also was "largely the language for all higher educa-

tion in all the Universities of the country," and therefore "the language widely understood among the higher sections in all walks of life in all the linguistic regions." In addition, also owing to the State Reorganization, "regional" languages were making much greater progress than Hindi, whose position had been strengthened only in Hindi-speaking states.[71]

Andhra, Assam, Bombay, and West Bengal stated that they had done nothing to comply with the constitution's promotion of Hindi as India's official language. A "very important witness of a non-Hindi speaking State" ominously declared that if Hindi were "imposed on me...I would secede from the Union," and the Madras government declared that Madras would continue to use the regional languages for administrative purposes because "Hindi cannot be adopted for this purpose." Inter-state communications could not be conducted in Hindi either, and the Public Service Examinations were to be conducted in all the languages listed in the constitution, on the basis of a quota system.

As for English, if and when it was to be replaced, its place was to be taken by regional languages.[72] For the Madras government, therefore, English was to remain the second language and Hindi the third language, while colleges and universities were to preserve it because English provided what "Hindi cannot provide"—that is, "direct access to creative modern thought." Contrary to the Russian/Soviet experience, in which but for a short period in the 1920s Moscow had always made sure that other nationalities dealt with the world through Russian, Dravidic India did not want to do so through Hindi, and supported this stand by also pointing to Hindi's weaknesses.

The Madras government added that the "language transition process" from English to Hindi could not even start "until the reconstruction of States is completed on the basis of the recommendations of the SRC," which were published three months after the establishment of the OLC. The SRC thus strengthened state languages, and weakened the push in favor of Hindi, altering the course toward a "national" India.[73]

The importance of government jobs, and thus of entry examinations for Indian graduates and their families, made the switch to Hindi even more explosive: as the government of Kashmir stated, "the residents of the non-Hindi speaking areas will be at a considerable...disadvantage compared to persons from Hindi areas if English is replaced by Hindi as the medium of the Union Public Services Commission Examinations."[74]

Dissenting voices were heard also within the OLC, whose president was forced to deny that the commission aimed at creating "two classes of citizens" (Hindi and non-Hindi speakers), and to reject "the allegation of 'Hindi imperialism.'" The criticism leveled at Hindi's backwardness instead forced Kher to denounce the "denigration of [Hindi's] cultural value and intellectual tradition." Yet everybody knew Hindi to be a recent and not well-developed language, as the commission admitted by stressing the enormity of the "translatory work"

needed to provide it with textbooks, reference literature, and terminology. The model here was nineteenth-century Japan, whose choice to introduce the necessary elements of a suitably filtered Western culture through a strengthened Japanese medium was extolled by Mahatma Gandhi. The commission thus supported an autarchic view of India, reinforced by the use of Hindi.

However, underestimating the opposition, the OLC majority decided to push for Hindi against English and, indirectly, against "regional" languages too, laying the basis for strengthening the alliance between these languages and English. India was to have an official lingua franca, Hindi, with regional languages and local mother tongues enjoying a lesser status. Hindi was to become compulsory at the secondary school stage all over the country, replacing English; and Indian students were to take an examination in Hindi at the end of secondary school, with qualifying results at first, and ranking ones to be instituted later on. At the same time, the commission rejected the proposal to make the study of another Indian language compulsory for Hindi-speaking students, de facto encouraging the non-Hindi states to follow the same course with Hindi.

As for universities, the OLC recalled Gandhi's statements against their use of English, and stressed the need to start using Hindi in entry exams and to strengthen teaching in Hindi. The commission's proclaimed aim was the "displacement of the English medium," which was to be replaced by Hindi because it was "imperative for serving the country's national unity that the intelligentsia in all the linguistic regions [was] educated in a common linguistic medium." The Soviet model was thus reaffirmed, also by the terms used. According to the constitution, however, universities were free to decide the language of instruction, and Nehru had just promised that the government was going to stay away from these matters.[75]

Regarding public service examinations, the commission admitted that it was for the moment impossible to eliminate English, which was still the medium of university education, yet it favored moving toward a rapid introduction of Hindi, beginning with the introduction of a compulsory paper in Hindi for all candidates, though not in another Indian language for Hindi speakers. This could be done—it was argued—because the progress of Hindi among non-Hindi-speaking graduates would soon allow them to compete on equal terms with Hindi candidates *in Hindi*, this being a rather weak argument to say the least.

The commission also recommended the prescription of "a reasonable measure of knowledge of the Hindi language for entry into [public] service" and of "obligatory requirements on Government [and State] servants to qualify themselves in Hindi within a reasonable period." Finally, the commission demanded that state and union enactments be published in Hindi, with translations into the regional languages; that Hindi, alongside regional languages, become the language of legislation, both at the union and state levels; and that the Supreme Court prepare the switch to Hindi.

The Communists and the Hindi Nationalist Left, which shared the idea of transforming Hindi into India's Russian, supported the commission's proposals: English—they stated—damaged both Hindi and the mother tongues. Many intellectuals and university language professors agreed, and the Soviet term "language construction (*stroitel'stvo*)" was used, together with "language planning." The aim was the destruction of the "English wall" that separated the small English-speaking elite from the masses.

The main argument used to justify the removal of English was therefore a democratic one. As the OLC noted, British rule, which did not derive from the people, "could afford to conduct the administration in a language that was not understood, and could never come to be understood, by the vast masses of the country." In a democracy, however, this was simply unthinkable. The OLC thus followed the SRC lead, without realizing, however, that Hindi at the all-India level was *not*—save for Hindi-speakers—the citizens' "natural" choice, and that to adopt the democratic argument in these conditions meant in fact compulsion for other linguistic groups.

The fight against English—a "pernicious habit" of the "educated classes," to which it provided an "illusion of unity which is...masonic in character"[76]—was also a necessity for Maganbhai Desai, an OLC member fond of quoting Gandhi's September 1947 "plea for banishing English as a cultural usurper as we successfully banished the political rule of the English usurper." Yet, Desai also understood that a peremptory push for Hindi, like that which the OLC supported, could prove a big mistake. Until Hindi became a "richer and more developed" all-India language, the real problem in his opinion was "to remove the English medium quickly and well." This could be done only with the help of regional languages, which Desai called upon to side with Hindi in the fight against English.

Desai, however, seemed unable to understand that his radical, Soviet-like two- (or three-) language model (Hindi, plus regional [plus mother tongue, if appropriate]), which the Communists also supported, reinforced "regional" languages that would rather side with English than with Hindi. The belief that the common democratic nature of Indian languages would serve as the basis for their united front against English was an illusion because democracy was only one front of the linguistic battlefield. At least as important was liberty from oppression—an oppression that Dravidic languages especially, though not solely, felt as coming from Hindi: in the eyes of India's non-Hindi linguistic groups democracy—that is, the power of the majority—seemed dangerous.

The main dissenting voices within the commission were Suniti Chatterji and the president of the Tamil Nadu Congress, Paramasivan Subbarayan. Both criticized the *Report* for its failure "to understand the feelings and the intellectual approach of the non-Hindi-speaking peoples for their own languages, and also for English." Chatterji went as far as to claim that English was "the silver lining to the cloud" of British rule because it provided "the window through

which we can have air and light from outside." Non-Hindi speakers, he added, defended English because it had proved useful to the growth of their own languages: "It is just a kind of narrow nationalism and patriotism in blinkers that would consider English as anti-Indian or anti-national.... We have been, and shall continue to be, most intensely national and patriotic with English... this great instrument of modern intellectual life and culture."[77]

After stating that Hindi was in no way superior to other Indian languages, Chatterji and Subbarayan noted that the *Report*'s "subdued but desperate haste to bring in Hindi for the whole of India" was therefore but another sign of a "Hindi imperialism." "The intransigent use of Hindi in the Hindi States"—Chatterji maintained—"will split India into a series of independent linguistic States," a danger strengthened by "the concept of Linguistic Minority Nations (not Linguistic Minority Group within a single Nation), which is officially proclaimed in Communist countries," and which the nationalist Left supported. In order to prevent the transformation of the pro-Hindi stand into the "source of a growing fissiparous tendency," it was thus necessary to "keep in abeyance" both the use of the Hindi language for the official purposes of the union and the restrictions on English: a multilingual country such as India needed linguistic choices capable of "promoting and strengthening unity," not choices that fed conflicts[78] (Pakistan comes to mind, where Ayub Khan's pro-Urdu and pro-English policies exacerbated linguistic and national conflicts, igniting the process that led to the separation of Bangladesh, and bloody language riots in Sindh and other provinces).[79]

In fact, in the decade following the publication of the OLC *Report*, a great Hindi-English battle was fought. In 1956 the Telugu Academy convened a union language convention in Madras to protest the imposition of Hindi. In 1958 Rajagopalachari (who had reneged his original pro-Hindi stand) organized an all-India language conference at which Frank Anthony, a paladin of English, stated that "Hindi today is a symbol of communalism; it is a symbol of religion; it is a symbol of chauvinism, and, worst of all, it is a symbol of oppression of minority languages."[80] In 1958, in spite of vehement Communist and Hindi opposition, Madras always sided in favor of English, West Bengal unanimously voted to reject the exclusive use of Hindi, and even the Sikh Akali Dal in Punjab declared its opposition to it. Among English's most vehement supporters were the Dalits ("Untouchables") and their leader, Ambedkar, who saw English as a tool of emancipation from the oppression of Hindu culture—so much so that some Dalit communities still revere Lord Macaulay, who brought English education to India, and venerate English as a goddess of learning.[81]

In this fight Nehru played an ambiguous role: on the one hand, he favored the use of English, in 1958 reassuring the non-Hindi peoples that English would remain an associate official language as long as they wanted, and thereby irritating Congress's pro-Hindi faction. Later on, however, while battling harsh

Tamil opposition, which went so far as to demand separation, Nehru termed English "foreign" and its use "dishonourable."[82]

Under these conditions, on February 1959, the Lok Sabha Committee on the Official Language presented a strong pro-Hindi report to the president. In April 1960, however, a presidential order indefinitely postponed the deadline for the switchover to Hindi; and in 1961, searching for a compromise, the Chief Ministers' Conference adopted a three-language formula (Hindi, English, and "regional") that proved a failure: non-Hindi students did not want to study Hindi, Hindi students did not want to learn a regional language, everybody wanted English, and Hindi was not accepted in the south.

In the 1962 election Congress scored much better results in non-Hindi states, and in connection with the need to lessen internal tensions after India's defeat by China in the Sino-Indian war, in 1963 English became India's "associate official language." However, fearing the pro-Hindi aggressiveness of both the Left and the Nationalist Right, pro-English forces objected to the word *may* ("English *may* be used for official purpose after 1965"), and proposed to replace it with "shall." On 26 January 1965, when—as the constitution foresaw—Hindi became the country's official language, Rajagopalachari convened an anti-Hindi conference in Madras that proclaimed Tamil determination to resist Hindi as an "unwise, unjust and discriminatory tyranny," and to favor English. Copies of the constitution's seventeenth chapter—which in Rajagopalachari's words turned "good patriots and intelligent Indian citizens...into angry secessionists"—were burned, people died, and the tension grew until 1967, when "may" was replaced with "shall." It was also decided that Hindi states and the federal government could write to non-Hindi states in Hindi, but had to add an English translation, while non-Hindi states could write directly in English, and that Hindi, English, and the other fourteen major languages could be used in the civil service exams.[83]

State reorganization and the Hindi question were thus strictly related, and the 1967 victory for English was also a result of the new strength that the linguistic states, and thus "regional" languages, had acquired in the 1950s. These states, and these languages, were then able to impose a real multilingual system, English-centered at the top, which possibly saved India from Pakistan's fate, confirming Fishman's observation that inner forces and interests, more than the colonial past, contributed to the rise of global English in which the English victory in India in the 1960s was a milestone.[84] Over the following years the number of languages listed in the constitution's eighth schedule continued to increase, with the addition of Sindh in 1967, of Manipuri, Nepali, and Konkani in 1992, but also of English and French (because of Pondicherry), with the total growing from fourteen to twenty-two.[85]

Finally, it is worth remembering that India's linguistic conflicts also attracted attention in the United States. In 1954–59, for instance, the Rockefeller Founda-

tion supported Indian summer schools to train teachers from Indian colleges in the hope that "having some Linguistic Institutes would solve India's language problems." The participating American linguists—Charles A. Ferguson and John J. Gumperz among them—were soon involved in problems such as bilingualism and the linguistic aspects of caste differentiation. As Gumperz was to note, "events in India" thus "had a direct impact in creating interest in sociolinguistic issues in the United States."[86]

Conclusion

The 1956 linguistic state reorganization raised great concern "that the States would be concerned primarily with their own development, that national authority would be eroded."[87] In fact, the new Indian states revived the European interwar Prague School's experience of "cultivating" the locally dominant languages,[88] and launched a wave of ideologically inspired architectural building, while the local, language-based film industry fed nationalistic trends, especially but not solely in Tamil Nadu, where the movie community also provided a large part of the political elite.[89] In sum, if up until now the 1956 concerns have proved ill-founded, the creation of linguistic states did indeed strengthen regionalism and stirred demands for increased state autonomy, especially in the non-Hindi south, where the development of independent national cultures created (and will still possibly create) serious problems.

Yet overall, as Ambedkar foresaw, "instead of weakening" India, linguistic reorganization consolidated it. The reorganization avoided the risk of "certain death" implicit in the preservation of linguistically mixed provinces, and prevented the breakup of the Indian Union, which might have occurred if a new wave of Hindi "imperialism" caused reactions like those that led to the separation of Bangladesh in 1971 and fed the language violence of the 1980s in Sindh.[90]

India's experience with linguistic states can thus be compared with the Soviet one from yet another angle. Recalling Terry Martin and Ronald Suny's view of the USSR as *also* a cradle of (crippled) nations,[91] one might claim that India and the USSR have been the two classical loci of *directed* ethnolinguistic state-building efforts (but also of *directed* nation-destroying efforts in the Soviet case). In post-1848 Europe and Anatolia, however, such building happened "spontaneously"—that is, not within the framework of a unitary state, and was therefore accompanied by recurrent waves of ethnic cleansing, forced deportations, and genocidal "final solutions." In all three cases (India, USSR, post-1848 Europe, including Anatolia), moreover, this ethnonational state building has been linked to a "modernization process [that] led to the development from within the local societies of new elites" that have led, and/or

profited or wanted to profit from, state and nation building and modernization itself.[92]

In spite of its dramatically variable costs, in all three cases language proved to be a valid principle for state reorganization in "modern" times, featuring mass literacy and democratic, or in any case mass-based, forms of government. In particular, linguistic "national" reorganizations directed from above proved both feasible and capable of avoiding the huge costs involved in "spontaneous" linguistic reorganizations, indicating that nations can indeed be manipulated, both for upgrading and downgrading, for nation building and dismantling. This requires, however, taking into account historically produced factors such as language, territory, culture, local elites, et cetera, and operating through them. The presence of a central authority capable of managing these "objective" factors can thus play a crucial role: for instance, it can guarantee the rights of minorities, and at the same time support and affirm the superiority of the "one state, one language" principle, which accommodates the need for mass involvement in the life of the state without provoking the conflicts associated with the "one language, one state" criteria. However, it can also cripple what it previously helped to build.

Furthermore, other factors—religion in particular—seem at times capable of trumping language. And all federations, or would-be federations, based on linguistic states (the European Union included)—that is, the very central organizations that can dictate the formation, or accommodate the existence, of linguistic states—are faced with the difficult problem of finding a generally accepted and not resented lingua franca, whose absence or weakness can prove extremely detrimental. As detrimental, however, can be its presence in cases where such a medium is not accepted as "neutral," as was the case with Russian or Hindi.

Language-based state organization is also continuously undermined by migrations: as the SRC rightly stated, it is "unrealistic to regard the linguistic situation in any area as static: more and more cities or pockets, which are Indian rather than provincial in character are bound to come into existence all over the country."[93] Unions of linguistic states can thus be viable, but are in need of continuous management, as are the linguistic states forming them. In particular, these unions are weakened by the presence of a single, dominant nationality and/or language. Yet they do need a vehicular language: a two language formula (three, in the presence of local mother tongues), based on a central, neutral language, thus seems to be the most rational approach, much preferred over monolinguism or a two-language system pivoting on a dominant, nonneutral language.

Notes

1. This essay is part of a longer text I hope to publish elsewhere, extending the comparison back to the late nineteenth century. Both belong to a larger project dealing with the national and language question from the French Revolution to the postcolonial decades.
2. Andrea Graziosi, "Viewing the Twentieth Century through the Prism of Ukraine," in *The Future of the Past: New Perspectives in Ukrainian History*, ed. Serhii Plokhy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2016), 97–118.
3. P. R. Brass, "Language and National Identity in the Soviet Union and India," in *The Politics of India since Independence* (London, 1990), 300–332, one of the few attempts at comparison.
4. G. A. Grierson, ed., *Linguistic Survey of India* (Calcutta, 1903–22); Terry Martin, *An Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001); F. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2005); J. Cadiot, *Le laboratoire impérial: Russie-Urss, 1860–1940* (Paris, 2007).
5. I owe this and other remarks to Tomasz Kamusella, whose help proved invaluable.
6. A. M. D'iakov, *The National Problem in India Today* (Moscow, 1966); B. I. Kluyev, *India: National and Language Problems* (Delhi, 1981); Debnarayan Modak, *Dynamics of National Question in India: The Communist Approach, 1942–64* (Kolkata, 2006).
7. India, State Reorganisation Commission (hereafter SRC), *Report* (Delhi, 1955), 1–9; Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (New York, 2001).
8. R. K. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal* (Delhi, 1984); N. K. Sengupta, *Bengal Divided: The Unmaking of a Nation, 1905–1971* (Delhi: Penguin, 2007).
9. *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Calcutta, 1918), 159.
10. SRC, *Report*, 12.
11. Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954); R. Pipes., ed., *The Unknown Lenin* (New Haven, 1996); M. Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1968); Andrea Graziosi, *Bol'sheviki i krest'iane na Ukraine, 1918–1919 gody* (Moscow, 1997).
12. Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna, 1907); R. Rosdolsky, *Friedrich Engels and the "Non-historic Peoples"* (Glasgow, 1986); R. Gallissot, "Nazione e nazionalità nei dibattiti del movimento operaio," in *Storia del marxismo*, ed. E. J. Hobsbawm et al., vol. 2 (Torino, 1979), 787–864. It could be argued that Kautsky's 1898 proposal to reorganize the Austro-Hungarian empire as a federal state based on linguistically determined units and the federal guarantee of minority rights was the seed of Lenin's USSR model, and therefore of India's state reorganization in the 1950s.
13. E. van Ree, "Heroes and Merchants: Stalin's Understanding of National Character,"

Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, no. 1 (2007): 41–65; A. Graziosi, "Vneshniaia i vnutrennaia politika Stalina: o natsional'nom voprose v imperskom kontekste, 1901–1926 gg," in *Istoriia Stalinizma: itogi i problemy izuchenia* (Moscow, 2011), 215–35; A. Graziosi, "La 'question nationale,'" pt. 3, chap. 6 in *Histoire de l'URSS* (Paris, 2010), 469–83; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Cadiot, *Laboratoire impérial.*

14. P. R. Brass, *Language, Religion, and Politics in North India* (New York, 1974); Christopher R. King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* (Bombay, 1994); W. Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (New York, 2004).
15. Mahatma Gandhi, *Thoughts on National Language* (Ahmedabad, 1956).
16. A. Ayres, *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan* (Delhi, 2009), 34; Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Delhi, 2004), 62; R. D. King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (Delhi, 1997). Of course many European leaders too, from Cavour to Mannerheim, knew their "national" language poorly.
17. J. Nehru, "The Question of Language" [1937], in *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937–1940* (London, 1941), 241–61. "Communalism," "communal conflict," etc. are specific Indian English terms, which correspond to Europe's "ethnonational," "ethnoreligious," or "ethnolinguistic."
18. Nehru, *Autobiography*, 377–80.
19. Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*; A. Graziosi, *L'Urss di Lenin e Stalin, 1914–1945* (Bologna, 2007), 201–8.
20. J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi, 1985), 29; J. Nehru, "The Tribal Folk," 7 June 1952, in *Speeches* (Delhi, 1949–1968), 2:581.
21. V. P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (New York, 1956), 31.
22. S. C. Patra, *Formation of the Province of Orissa: The Success of the First Linguistic Movement in India* (Calcutta, 1979).
23. K. V. Narayana Rao, *The Emergence of Andhra Pradesh* (Bombay, 1973).
24. S. Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).
25. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 7 (Moscow, 1954), 135–54. S. N. Mazumdar, *Marxism and the Language Problem in India* (Delhi, 1970); Modak, *Dynamics of National Question.*
26. K. M. Munshi in B. Fadia, *State Politics in India* (Delhi, 1984), 1: 67.
27. See Y. Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994); N. Pianciola, "Gruppi senza etnicità: alla ricerca delle nazioni in Asia centrale, 1917–1924," *Storica*, 43–45 (2009): 257–311; and Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, on the urban Russians' problem in Ukraine, for the treatment of similar questions in the USSR.
28. Menon, *Story of the Integration*, 282.
29. India, Linguistic Provinces Commission, *Report* (Delhi, 1948).
30. SRC, *Report*, 16.
31. G. Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Delhi, 1999); B. V. R. Rao, *The Constitution and Language Politics of India* (Delhi, 2003).

32. According to the 1951 census, however, 55% of Pakistan inhabitants spoke Bengali (98% in East Bengal), 28% Punjabi, 6.6% Pushtu, 5.3% Sindhi, and only 3.3% Urdu, which was the language of choice of the Partition refugees who settled in cities and provided a substantial part of the country's elite. To end the conflict between Urdu and Bengali, the Aga Khan proposed to replace the former with Arabic. Yet Urdu's ties to Islamic culture, and to the nineteenth century's controversies with Hindi in Northern India, which were seen as the Partition's background, proved stronger. Ayres, *Speaking Like a State*, 32–35.
33. B. R. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Linguistic States* (Aligarh, UP, 1989), 20; India, Official Language Commission (hereafter OLC), *Report* (Delhi, 1956), 281.
34. Constituent Assembly Debates, *Official Report*, reprint (Delhi, 1988), 7:235.
35. The eighth schedule initially listed 14 languages, including Sanskrit, with 555 speakers in 1951. According to that year's census, Hindi and Urdu accounted together for 42% of India's inhabitants, followed by Telugu (9.24%), Marathi (7.57), Tamil (7.4), and Bengali (7.03). English was known by 3.8 million people, 1% of the total population.
36. M. Apte, "Language Controversies in the Indian Parliament, 1952–1960," in *Language and Politics*, ed. J. F. and W. M. O'Barr (The Hague, 1976), 213–34.
37. K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905–1944* (Madurai, 1980); S. Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970* (Berkeley, 1997); L. Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, and Politics in South India* (Bloomington, 2009).
38. OLC, *Report*, 298.
39. Ibid., 285.
40. Modak, *Dynamics of National Question in India*.
41. P. K. Sharma, *Political Aspects of States Reorganization in India* (Delhi, 1969), 90–91; A. Graziosi, *A New, Peculiar State: Explorations in Soviet History, 1917–1937* (Westport, 2000), 85.
42. R. Guha, *India after Gandhi* (London, 2007), 189.
43. In Pakistan the imposition of Urdu, and the aggressiveness of the refugees from Northern India (the Mohajirs) caused much more serious conflicts, especially in Sindh Karachi (where in 1951 Mohajirs reached 57.5% of the population), and in East Pakistan, where on 21 February 1952 the police killed four students demostrating in support of Bengali. In 1956 Bengali was elevated to the status of official language, yet the Urdu-speaking elite continued to discriminate against it, beacuse of its non-arabic alphabet, its Indic rather than "Persianate" appearance, and its Sankrit-derived and thus "inherently un-Islamic" lexicon. Ayres, *Speaking Like a State*, 41.
44. King, *Nehru*, 107; Sharma, *Political Aspects*, 56.
45. SRC, *Report*, i, 22. The commission's members, none of whom belonged to Congress, were S. Fazl Ali, K. M. Pannikar, and H. N. Kunzru.
46. Ibid., ii–iii.
47. Nehru, *Speeches*, 3:394.

48. As Tomasz Kamusella has pointed out to me, Nehru was not interested in the Chinese ethnonational model of territorial organization, which followed that "implemented in the Russian SFSR...China was preserved as the (nation-)state of the (Chinese) Han with Chinese as the sole official (and national) language. However, a plethora of autonomous republics, districts, and regions with their specific languages were established for non-Han minorities," this being the result of the non-Han minorities' weakness vis-à-vis non-Russian and non-Hindi ones.
49. SRC, *Report*, 40–41, 206.
50. Menon, for instance, was an admirer of Sir John Malcolm and Colonel James Tod, who reorganized Central India and Rajasthan. In Menon, *Story of the Integration*, 221.
51. SRC, *Report*, 25; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*.
52. SRC, *Report*, 37–40.
53. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Linguistic States*; for the traditional European view, see P. S. Mancini, *Saggi sulla nazionalità* [1851–1872] (Rome, 1944).
54. SRC, *Report*, 63–66.
55. A. Graziosi, "'Building the First System of State Industry in History,' 1923–1926," *Cahiers du monde russe* 32, no. 4 (1991): 539–80.
56. SRC, *Report*, 46. This is why the commission opposed merging Hyderabad's Telugu-speaking Telangana with Telugu-speaking Andhra, and proposed to create a reduced Hyderabad state out of the union of Telangana with the Urdu-speaking Muslim cities. The proposal was rejected, yet almost sixty years later Telangana did separate from Andrha.
57. See, for instance, N. Davies, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London, 2002), or M. Mazower, *Salonica: City of Ghosts* (London, 2004).
58. SRC, *Report*, 112–21; M. Weiner, ed., *State Politics in India* (Princeton, N.J., 1968), 183.
59. Graziosi, *Vneshniaia i vnutrennaia politika Stalina*; R. Pupo, *Trieste '45* (Rome, 2010).
60. SRC, *Report*, 140–56.
61. R. Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe, 1848–1945* (London, 1993).
62. SRC, *Report*, 205–16.
63. Ibid., 234.
64. Brass, "Language and National Identity in the Soviet Union and India."
65. J. A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism* (Rowley, Mass., 1973).
66. Sharma, *Political Aspects*.
67. Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 197.
68. A section written by Barve and with this title is found in OLC, *Report*, 481–95.
69. Hennadii Yefimenko, "The Kremlin's Nationality Policy in Ukraine after the Holodomor of 1932–33," in *After the Holodomor: The Enduring Impact of the Great Famine on Ukraine*, ed. A. Graziosi, L. Hajda, and H. Hryn (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 69–122.
70. The crucial difference between the Indian and Soviet legal systems made the

switch to Hindi difficult. While the USSR followed the continental approach, based upon codes that could be easily translated, India followed the Anglo-Saxon precedent-based system. These precedents were all in English, and formed a body whose translation raised enormous problems.

71. OLC, *Report*, 429–32, 41.
72. Ibid., 338, 361.
73. Ibid., 83, 338.
74. Ibid., 276.
75. Ibid., 99.
76. Ibid., 371. In a way English thus played in India the role French had played in the Russian Empire and in Prussia until the beginning of the nineteenth century.
77. Ibid., 291.
78. Ibid., 277–78.
79. The 1970 decision to use Sindh as a college medium of instruction raised the fury of Urdu speakers, who condemned it with the words reserved for Bengali supporters: "fifth column," "leftists," "anti-Islamic," "anti-Pakistan" (Ayres, *Speaking Like a State*). On the Separation, see S. M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic nation* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006); S. Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013).
80. J. Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development* (Berkeley, 1970), 193.
81. Z. Masani, "Chetan Bhagat, meet Macaulay," *India Today*, 6 November 2014.
82. R. Kannan, *Anna: The Life and Times of C. N. Annadurai* (Delhi, 2010), 271–73.
83. Ibid., 287.
84. J. A. Fishman, A.W. Conrad, and A. Rubal-Lopez, eds, *Post-Imperial English, 1940–1990* (Berlin and New York, 1996). In the following decades, the appearance of an "Indian literature in English, the dramatic rise in global preminence of Indian science and global business (conducted virtually entirely in English) very effectively established the language's national bona fides," while in Pakistan the rise of global English multiplied the English private schools. Ayres, *Speaking Like a State*, 162.
85. E. Annamalai, ed., *Language Movements in India* (Mysore, 1979).
86. C. Bratt Paulston and R. G. Tucker, eds., *The Early Days of Sociolinguistics: Memories and Reflections* (Dallas: SIL International Publications, 2010), 35–41,115; U. Weinreich, "Functional Aspects of Bilingualism in India," *Word* 13 (1957): 203–33; Charles A. Ferguson and John J. Gumperz, eds., *Linguistic Diversity in South Asia*, special issue of *International Journal of American Linguistics* 26, no. 3 (1960).
87. Weiner, *State Politics in India*, 6.
88. P. A. Luelsdorff, ed., *Prague School of Structural and Functional Linguististics: A Short Introduction* (Amsterdam, 1994); J. A. Fishman, C. A. Ferguson, and J. Das Gupta, eds., *Language Problems of Developing Countries* (New York, 1968).
89. I. Narain, ed., *State Politics in India* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1976); Babulal Fadia, *State Politics in India* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1984); B. Fadia and

R. Menaria, *Sarkaria Commission Report and Centre-State Relations* (Agra, 1990); Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 199–200.

90. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Linguistic States*; Raghavan, *1971*. In Sindh, where Mohajirs had become "a fully ethnicized category" in cities, but where the countryside remained solidly Sindh-speaking, linguistic riots in the 1980s provoked hundreds of deaths, particularly among students. Ayres, *Speaking Like a State*, 54.
91. R. G. Suny and T. Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford, 2001); Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union*, 297.
92. N. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, N.J., 2010); A. Ferrara and N. Pianciola, *L'età delle migrazioni forzate: esodi e deportazioni in Europa, 1853–1953* (Bologna, 2012).
93. SRC, *Report*, 236.