Socialinės studijos

CIVILIZATIONAL BASIS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA

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During the last decade, the concept of civilization as applied to the study of international relations, has become a controversial issue in political science. This article attempts at examining the relationship between civilization and the process of national integration of a multiethnic state. Considering the history of the country, the size and diversity of the population, the Indian case is exceptional. However, for the same reasons it provides ample evidence to establish the relationship between specific features of civilization and the formation of supraethnic political culture as a major prerequisite for the stability of a multiethnic polity.

India can be regarded as a fairly successful case of national integration. Several multiethnic states broke up as a consequence of centrifugal trends. The disintegration of the Soviet Union was predetermined by a variety of factors, including civilizational differences and the fact that its vast ethnic periphery had been acquired by the use of force and subsequently reconquered or re-annexed by the Soviet regime. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia broke up despite the linguistic and cultural affinities of their ethnic constituents. Integrity of a number of Asian and African countries has been preserved by military and different types of authoritarian regimes.

Several decades ago hardly any expert in ethnopolitics claimed that India had more cohesion and survival capacity than multiethnic communist states. India's linguistic and cultural diversity, the very size of linguistic groups, many of them larger than majority of independent nations, religious, social and caste cleavages often were and remain interpreted as threats to the territorial integrity of the nation.[1] Some Indian researchers up till now raise serious doubts about the nature of the Indian unity: "it is difficult to say how far India has

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[1] The most widely known study was S. S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1960. Nowadays, the spectre of disintegration is occasionally mentioned in reports from India, e.g. L. Harding, "India Feels Threat of Balkanisation", *The Guardian*, Nov. 27, 2000.

progressed in the past 50 years beyond mere political integration and towards the creation of a nation-state, through the spread of national sentiment among the masses, and the transfer of loyalties from regional or ethnic groups to the nation, whose legal expression is the Indian Union."[2]

Ethnic pluralism, constituting a typical feature of the majority of modern states, poses a serious challenge to the integrity and, in many cases, the existence of a polity. Both theoretical research and hundreds of studies prove that ethnic identity, whenever it emerges, is followed by the formation of ethnic nationalism (an invention of ethnic entrepreneurs according to the fashionable theory) which in turn serves as a platform for political mobilization. Ethnic nationalism need not be interpreted as either irrational, evil and disruptive scheming, or exalted patriotism. It can be best understood as an ideology and movement aimed to achieve or preserve optimal conditions for the existence of a group which, according to its spokesmen, constitutes a nation. In many cases, especially in Europe, the end result of ethnic nationalism was a nation state, but more often its project falls short of that aim. Depending upon past history, group status, cultural compatibility and other factors, the perception of optimal conditions may vary from cultural or territorial autonomy and citizenship rights to secession and establishment of independent states. In any case, it poses a challenge to the multiethnic state.

National integration issue

Responses of multiethnic state to the ethnonatiopnalist challenge also varies, ranging from suppression of any ethnic claims and movements to adminstrative and/or political reforms or granting of independence. Except for the last option and segregation, the policies of state towards ethnic groups add up to form its policy of national integration – a term coined after the collapse of the colonial system to deal with the integrity and stability dimension of the postcolonial states. Several decades ago Rajni Kothari, probably the best Indian political scientist during his time, complained that compared to the problems of modernization of traditional societies, "scant attention has been paid to the typical problems and policy issues involved in the building of new states and nations, the questions of national autonomy and the factors that promote or undermine it."[3] There were several reasons for this neglect. During the twentieth century, 'national integration' was not an issue in North America and, with minor exceptions, in Western Europe, and consequently a subject of marginal importance in political studies. Many experts, following an ecclectical theory combining Marxist and Neo-liberal approaches, regarded national cohesion and assimilation as a function economic development and claimed that ethnic differences and conflicts would vanish in the course of economic

[2] Sagarika Dutt, "Identities and the Indian State: An overview", *Third World Quarterly*, Sept. 1998, vol. 19, Issue 3, p. 413.

[3] Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970, p. 1.

development and division of labour. Even in Europe, despite the "ethnic paradox" of the 1960s, the subsequent wave of ethnonationalist movements in Cyprus, Britain, Spain, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, some authorities on nationalism continued to assert that in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century nations and nationalism will be reduced to "subordinate, and often rather minor roles", with nation-states, nations and ethnic groups "retreating before, resisting, adapting to, being absorbed or dislocated by the new supranational restructuring of the globe."[4]

Since then the discussion on globalization has grown increasingly sophisticated and the on-going processes are perceived as highly complex and not readily predictable. However, at a state-level analysis the question of viability of multiethnic states remains: Why the policy of national integration, pursued by the state, succeeds in some cases but fails in other cases?

Discussion of national integration can easily become tautological because it cannot be measured by any set of precise criteria. The question of which societies can be regarded as integrated and which do not qualify as such goes back to the basic issues of sociology concerning the means, forces and mechanisms which hold the society together. The two opposite approaches to this issue – theories of coercion and consensus – lay stress on different dimensions of society and, being applied to multiethnic societies, can produce opposite judgments about the state of integration. At one extreme, any plural society, up to Belgium or Switzerland, is regarded as immanently fragile, while at the other end multiethnic states are regarded as typical units of political organization and the cases of secessionism, the sheer number of ethnic grooups considered, can be perceived as exceptions. "While there are thousands of ethnic nations in the world, there are at most only dozens of national groups numerous, unified and compact enough conceivably to serve as the nuclei of sovereign nation states."[5] As a consequence, the value of 'integration' as a conceptual tool has raised serious doubts,[6] while many social scientists rejected the term because the only integrated societies that do exist comprise face-to-face associations and groups and, hence, the term could not be applied to the population of particular geographical areas and to the modern industrial society. With the 'melting pot' scenario forming the basis of approach to 'modern' and modernizing plural societies, the term 'integration' was generally used in the sense of international economic, political, or military integration. The idea of national integration was reduced to democratic assimilationist and democratic pluralist versions, reflecting the Western realities and, in package with modernization theories, assumed that national integration and even

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[4] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality,* Cambridge University Press (2nd ed.), 1992, p. 191.

[5] Michael Lind, "In Defense of Liberal Nationalism", *Foreign Affairs,* May/June 1994, vol. 73, Issue 3, p. 89.

[6] Stefanie G. Neuman, "Integration: Conceptual Tool or Academic Jargon?", S. G. Neuman (ed.) (1976a), *Small States and Segmented Societies. National Political Integration in a Global Environment,* New York, Washington, London: Praeger Publishers, 1976. pp. 1–43.

assimilation was an inevitable by-product of modernization and development in the Third world countries.

The approach to the problem of national integration is a matter of perspective. From the standpoint of economic determinism it means division of labour and the formation of a country-wide market, from the political point of view it is synonymous with the formation of, and participation in supraethnic political institutions, from the cultural perspective it is likely to mean acculturation of minorities and the spreading of common culture, perceived as normative. Karl Deutsch defined integration in functional terms as "the attainment, within a territory, of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful change among the population."[7] During the subsequent period, the perception of the state as legal by all major segments of the population and formation of their loyalty to the existing political unit have been regarded by many scholars as politically relevant criterion. In one of the earlier studies, integration has been defined as "a measure not of social homogeneity but of the ability of a political unit to conduct its important and necessary business without dissaffecting large bodies of its constituents (so they are no longer willing to have their affairs regulated by or to participate in the particular system)."[8] Closer to the point, an Indian scholar described national integration as "the breakdown of fragmented group existence based on particularistic loyalties, and its supercession by generalist loyalties to the total aggregation of the political community – a nation."[9] The latter definition is in conformity with the pluralist 'unity in diversity' perception of an ethnically heterogeneous society and stresses the psychological aspect – the formation of a new (Indian in this case) element in the identity structure of groups and individuals.

National integration concerns most aspects and functions of ethnicity, and it is a process, occurring in virtually all spheres of societal life: politics, economics, culture and group identity. According to Joseph Rothschild integration comprises three different phenomena:

1. "Life chances" integration, i.e. achieving similar levels of mortality, literacy rate, income;

2. Cultural integration – full assimilation or acculturation, acceptance of dominating and allegedly rational norms in crucial spheres while admitting ethnocultural differences in marginal and private sphere; or full assimilation;

3. Political integration: acceptance of the legitimacy of the system either of free will or under indirect pressure.[10]

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[7] Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communications: An Enquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, (2nd ed.), Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press, 1966, p. 2.

[8] S. G. Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

[9] Rasheeduddin Khan, "The Problematique: The Heritage of Composite Culture as an Input in the Process of Building a New National Identity", R. Khan (ed.), *Composite Culture of India and National Integration*, Ahmedabad, etc.: Indian Institute of Advanced Study in association with Allied Publishers, p. 63.

[10] Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, p. 108–109.

Each of these aspects of integration can be accepted with certain qualifications. "Life chances" integration obviously refer to ethnosocial stratification and ethnic division of labour, regarded by many researchers as the principal, or even the single cause of ethnic conflicts.

Detailed discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, however, two general observations have to be made. First, full and complete elimination of differences of "life chances" is not a realistic project in case of compactly settled ethnic groups since regional disparities are conditioned by geography, climate, availability of natural resources and a number of other factors. Second, the perception of ethnosocial differences by the members of the groups concerned is the crucial factor on the political level, since economic issues may become or not become politically relevant irrespective of the actual situation.

The essence of cultural integration is the acceptance of a normative culture – either of a dominant group or of certain supraethnic elements shared by major groups. Assimilation goes beyond integration as it generally means disappearance of the group in question and eventually formation of a culturally homogeneous community.

Political integration by definition implies not only the accepatance of the legitimacy of the system but also at least a minimal degree of participation of ethnic elites in the government.

Anthony Birch has proposed a more detailed conceptual framework for analysis of integration, with each major aspect comprising several alternatives. In his list social integration may take the form of assimilation, 'melting pot' or cultural pluralism, economic integration may be 'full', 'partial' or turn into segregation, and political integration follows the patterns of 'political assimilation', accommodation, ethnic conflict and majority control.[11] Although some of the terms, particularly 'political assimilation' look too categorical or imprecise, the collection of concepts draws attention to all major aspects of the integration process.

Next, it is important to distinguish normative and functional integration. The former lays stress on socio-psychological aspects of integration: consensus on the basic values, consistence of norms, congruence of values and norms, effectiveness of norm internalization, solidarity, etc. Functional integration concerns primarily division of labour; among the factors conducive to this kind of integration are the need for specialization, growth of complementary relationship between the interacting groups, development of procedural rules to guide and maintain these relationships, the growing effectiveness of coordinating units and channels, etc. From economic and technocratic standpoint, which is basic for both Marxist and liberal approach to multiethnic polities, functional integration is regarded as primary in the sense that it, besides being 'objective' and 'rational', forms the basis and the driving force for the growth of homogeneity through the intermediary stage of cultural (normative, psychological) integration and assimilation, thus eroding those loyalties which are regarded as 'primordial', 'parochial', and generally 'irrational'.

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[11] Anthony Birch, *Nationalism and National Integration*, London, etc.: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 51.

The strategic aim of national integration is to create and/or promote loyalty of diverse ethnic groups to the existing polity and the political regime. On a personality level, psychologically it means the acceptance of nationality as a major, stable and positively perceived component of the identity structure alongside ethnicity, peer group, gender, occupation and a number of other components.

The outcome of national integration depends to a large extent upon the nature of ethnic heterogeneity, i.e. the type of differences between ethnic communities, and the perception of relations between them shaped in the course of history.

Historical legacy

Historical tradition is considered one of the major factors contributing to the legitimacy, vitality and cohesion of multiethnic states. Among the large modern states, China is the only nation that can boast an almost unbroken imperial tradition lasting about two millenia. India's record is rather mixed. Maurya, Kushan and Gupta polities never succeded uniting the whole subcontinent (but included parts of Central Asia) and were rather brief imperial interludes. It is rather doubtful if the idea of imperial supremacy survived during early Middle Ages. Since about 600 A.D. "the major political processes occured within the four central regions [North, Central, East, and South India].., and there was usually one premier power in each of these regions and none of them was able to control any of the other three for any length of time."[12] However, the very fact that empires re-emerged several times during the ancient period, provided a basis for the construction of the historical myth of political unity of India since the dawn of history. During modern period, this myth became integral part of Indian nationalism and occupied the central place in school-textbook version of Indian history, thus shaping collective historical memory of modern Indians. Imperial tradition as the symbol of political unity could be easily accepted because in India (unlike Europe) there was no general trend towards the emergence of nation-states: regional kingdoms, with minor reservations, generally were multiethnic polities whose borders never became stable for periods long enough for what could be called a take-off stage, i.e. convergence of political and ethnic identity of the dominant elites.

The Muslim rule and the British Raj, despite their alien origins, fit within the imperial tradition and their impact went far beyond political re-unification of the subcontinent. It cannot be claimed that the general reaction to Muslim domination was the growth of Hindu solidarity but in any case the conspicuous presence of a group outside the Hindu fold produced a deep and permanent confessional cleavage on the all-India scale, recognized by the members of both creeds. Mass destruction of Hindu temples in North India and religious zeal of Aurangzeb widened the gulf between Hindus and Muslims.

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[12] Hermann Kulke H. and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (3rd ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 107.

The British rule, irrespective of the preservation of the princely states and the political mobilization on confessional and – in some regions – on ethnic basis, introduced new elements of integration. The development of transportation and communications, vernacular press, introduction of Western education and the rule of law had two combined effects of (a) transforming India into a modern state, and (b) creating an all-Indian, ethnically diverse (although represented mostly by coastal groups) political elite, aware of its common status and interests. However, colonial modernization and integration by definition is immanently controversial process. Pax britannica and a certain degree of political unification were necessary conditions for optimizing extraction of 'colonial tribute' but simultaneously 'divide and rule' policy had to be followed (particularly after the Sepoy mutiny of 1857–59) in order to prevent the emergence of broad mass-based freedom movement.

Next to the emergence of modern state, the freedom movement is the major factor of national integration. Its importance in the process of forging national unity has been a permanent subject in modern Indian studies, and can be taken for granted. Salman Rushdie wrote on the occasion of India's fiftieth anniversary:

"The thing that became independent India had never previously existed, except that there had been an area, a zone called India. So it struck me that what was coming into being, this idea of a nation-state, was an invention. It was an invention of the nationalist movement. And a very successful invention."[13] Like in all other cases, the social phenomena that are called 'inventions' from constructivist perspective, materialize themselves only insofar as they are determined by a chain of causes, in this case by the British rule over the subcontinent and the freedom movement as a reaction to the alien raj.

A major controversial issue is the issue of the Muslim League separatism and partition. In the process of the long Muslim rule over large parts of India, Islam had emerged as the only major confession which Hinduism was not able to absorb. Therefore it posed a dilemma for the freedom movement: either to remain secular at the cost of a support on behalf of the masses in the context of traditional society or to appeal to religious symbols and gain the approval of the masses following the Hindu majority at the cost of alienating religious minorities. Indian National Congress lead by M. K. Gandhi opted for the first of these two strategies, thus gaining wider social base and to a large extent neutralizing the emerging ethnic nationalisms.[14] However in the process it became a combination of secular Indian (as represented by Jawaharalal Nehru, Maulana Azad et al.) and religious Hindu nationalism, thus

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[13] Salman Rushide, "A Fantasy Called India", *India today*, Special Issue, 1947–1998, 18 Aug. 1997, p. 58.

[14] One of the early symptoms was the foundation of Justice Party in Madras in 1916, articulating specific Dravidian grievances against the domination of Brahmans from the North. Anti-Bengali sentiment was strong among the Assamese, while Marathas in Bombay were unhappy about what they perceived as the domination of the Southerners.

indirectly supporting the 'two-nation' (Hindu and Muslim) theory and making partition inevitable.[15]

Economic, social and humanitarian costs of the partition were immense, but it can be argued that there were substantial political benefits from the national integration perspective. The immediate effect of partition was that it eliminated the pressure for a loose confederation and created ground for the establishment of a centralized federation and incorporation ('integration' in the current idiom) of the princely states. The long term effect was, probably, even more important, since to a large extent it solved the problem of predominantly Muslim periphery in a radical way and increased the civilizational homogeneity of India. It has been often argued by Indian scholars that partition along confessional lines in some ways provided more ground for communalism in India. Even if some logical arguments and empirical evidence (especially of armed secessionist movement in Kashmir and communal clashes in a number of states) can be used to support the point, it is by no means evident that there would have been less or no communalism if the whole subcontinent were a single nation state with Muslims statistically making up about one third of the total population. It may sound somewhat Machiavellian (although in many ways openly admitted by communal parties) that after the separation of the Muslim-majority regions, the "we/they" cleavage along confessional and, consequently, along religious-secular lines, reduces the relevance of ethnic diversity and ethnic nationalisms that could turn Indian subcontinent into a magnified version of the Balkans.

Hinduism and National Integration

It is common knowledge that Indian civilization as a congregation of cultures has grown from many sources and experienced numerous influences. However, except for the purposes of political correctness, it cannot be denied that its basis is Hinduism. Unlike other religions, the umbrella creed, labelled as Hinduism by the British Orientalists, from the earliest times has been instrumental in amalgamating diverse cultures and cults within the single social framework, rather than 'converting' infidels to a dogmatically uniform faith. Monotheistic religions, proclaiming unity of 'true believers' and converting them into a universal brotherhood of the Christians, or an *umma* of the Muslims by missionary zeal, crusade or jihad, at a later stage witnessed religious wars among their own followers divided into sects. Hinduism provided for incorporation of diverse groups principally by alotting them a certain place within its caste hierarchy and by Sanskritization, which initially was very superficial. Accepting diversity facilitated the incorporation, but simultaneously the inclusion was limited

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[15] Political cleavage between Hindus and Muslims became apparent during the Swaraj movement, the emergence of the Muslim League in 1906 and its acceptance of the 'Two-Nation Theory'. The militant Hindu nationalism of B. G. Tilak, not to mention V. D. Savarkar, and the refusal of the INC to accept the Muslim League as a partner since 1930s caused further alienation of a large section of Muslim elites.

to functional relations and set strict barriers to social intercourse, including intermarriage, and cultural integration. What concerns the caste system, we could say, that at the local level "[i]ts principal function seems to be to codify and perpetuate social and cultural diversity, yet simultenously to integrate all the diverse elements and to produce a tightly-knit society based on interdependence and subordination."[16]

The efficacy of the caste system as a mechanism of integration was limited in several ways. Even the village community which was the main unit of the traditional society, remained culturally fragmented. Caste system, comprising some 3,000 subcastes, or *jatis*, was actually myriads of local systems, with the flows of communication between them limited to the higher castes and, up to the last few decades, nearly nonexistant at the lowest level. Caste system prevented, especially in North India, the formation of ethnic groups on the basis of common religion or language, or rather it has led to the existence of ethnic groups within ethnic groups.[17] In other words, segmentation of linguistic communities along jati lines and the perseverence of corresponding identities in many cases formed a major obstacle for the emergence of ethnonations. Ethnic identity spread more effectively among those linguistic communities that were less fragmented along caste lines (Marathas, Dravidians) or had no caste system at all (Nagas, Mizos and other 'tribes' of Northeast India).

Casteism has been nearly unanimously condemned by modern Indian politicians and researchers because it is incompatible with individual social mobility, principles of meritocracy, human rights, and democracy. However, the ethnic composition of the population of India considered, it gave certain advantages over other multiethnic nations by the fact that it formed a serious obstacle to the formation of ethnonations as cultural *and* territorial communities that elsewhere brought about the disintegration of multiethnic states and empires. With the jati component preserving a prominent place in the identity structure, the formation of ethnic identity among linguistic communities in modern India is inevitably a slow and more complicated process than in Central and East Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the spread of literacy, development of communications and concerted efforts of ethnic elites produced a cumulative effect of 'national awakening' and the emergence of modern nations.

Hinduism and Political Culture

Political culture generally refers to the set of political beliefs, feelings, symbols, and values that prevail in a nation at a given time. Consequently, it includes such concepts as political ideology, public opinion, and national character. Since political culture is part of culture in the general sense of the term, it can also be defined as that part of culture which deals with

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[16] R. Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[17] Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 13.

politics. From this point of view, it is the set of norms, values, ideas and orientations about the ways of achieving and using power.

In multiethnic polities, the crucial issue is diversity and compatibility of political cultures. Unless ethnoregional political cultures are close enough to form a common national political culture, the regional differences may well undermine the functioning of national political system, create serious obstacles for the enforcement of uniform legal acts, evoke resistance either in active or passive form and produce communications gaps.[18] The dilemma of such societies is either an authoritarian regime relying upon the use of repressive mechanisms (banning ethnoregional parties, censorship, etc.) or the prospect of disintegration in the process of liberalization.[19]

Indian civilization, common cultural features and history have combined to produce a specific Indian political culture, peculiar to that subcontinent and different from political cultures of other regions. Its origins can be traced back to the ancient period. To be more precise, the Laws of Manu and Arthashastra give some idea of the Indian political culture of that period – codified, and obviously different from everyday political practices, but still a model to be pursued in most parts of the subcontinent. Similar formulas of the inscriptions, enumeratig the titles of the rulers and their subjects, and puranic sources clearly support the view that there was a fairly coherent idea about some ideal set of political institutions and norms.

However, a closer look at Indian politics reveals a markedly different set of institutions, political ideas, values, and norms. Irrespective of ethnoregional differences, caste system spread over the whole subcontinent and became a familiar institution that shaped or at least influenced the perception of social reality by the overwhelming majority of the population, including the Muslims. As such, it was the single major factor that shaped traditional political culture of India. Writing at the time before the concept of political culture was introduced in political science, Moris-Jones regarded caste or, rather, jati to be the principal determinant of what he called 'the traditional language of politics': "[...] it is a world in which men have their stations and from these stations in the little society they derive exclusively their rights and duties, their whole code of behaviour, even their look on things. Here opinions and interests alike belong not to persons but to groups... The location of political authority is no question of choice, will or election; it is given – by station in the social structure."[20]

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[18] Brian D. Silver and Kathleen M. Dowley, "Measuring Political Culture in Multiethnic Societies", *Comparative Political Studies*, May 2000, vol. 33, Issue 4, p. 517–540.

[19] Algis Prazauskas, "Authoritarianism and Democracy in India and the USSR", K. S. Singh (ed.). *Ethnicity, Caste and People. Proceedings of the Indo-Soviet seminars held in Calcutta and Leningrad, 1990*, New Delhi: Monohar, 1992, p. 295–306; "The Search for National Unity", *The Times of India*, Oct. 9, 1990.

[20] W. H. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics of India*, Bombay–Calcutta–Delhi–Madras: B. I. Publications, 1979 (reprint of 3rd revised ed.) p. 57–58.

The influence of casteism as political variable is not limited to village community level, but in many cases form the central focus of political competition at the state level where several factions representing different jatis and using them as vote-banks strive for power. Traditional caste solidarity very often has a decisive influence on voters' preferences. Besides, caste serves as one of the principal channels of political mobilisation. With the development of communications and the mass media, regional caste associations and federations have come into being. Fusion of castes "brings about consolidation and even extension of caste boundaries... [and] has significant political implications because caste is the one organisational category that the politicians turn to for support with greater confidence than to any other organisation category."[21] As noted by another Indian scholar, "[w]hile the form of our politics is secular, the style is essentially casteist."[22]

Political activity of the casts, except for Scheduled Castes and the Backward Castes, is not considered legitimate for constitutional, legal and other reasons. However, anti-casteism of the modern secular state has produced the opposite effect. Rajni Kothari notes in this connection: "It is precisely because the legitimacy of caste as the only basis of political power has been eroded that caste calculations have increased. Such things as respective numerical strength of different castes, choice of candidates, factions within caste and economic ties between castes are calculated as variables in the situation... What is important to grasp is that caste calculations were not needed when only persons belonging to some castes had a right to office; caste was irrelevant because it was omnipotent. Today with the breakdown of these barriers and the pragmatic pursuit of power, caste has turned into just another variable in politics alongside with many other variables."[23]

The overal impact of caste on politics is far from clear, and different researchers on the issue have often come to contrasting conclusions. However the matter, important to the purposes of this paper, is that caste is a major variable in Indian politics, familiar to all Indians (except for small communities like Nagas and Mizos), but hardly making any sense to an uninitiated observer. In this sense, caste as a political actor, caste calculations and preoccupation with caste issues, including its negation, are among a few specific traits, common to the political culture of all major linguistic communities.

Tolerance to, and acceptance of, diversity is the second feature of Hinduism that has shaped the political culture of India. Diversity of the Hindu world encompasses all major aspects of human condition, viz. culture, social units (jatis), objects (different gods or their forms) and ways (karma, jñana, bhakti) of worship, and different ends of man (dharma, artha, kāma, moksha). Thus, unlike monotheistic and militant teleological worldviews, it makes ground for and legitimates political pluralism, recognized as *sine qua non* for modern representative system of government. However, two reservations have to be made concerning

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[21] Goyal O. P., *Caste and Voting-Behaviour*. Delhi: Ritu Publishers, 1981, p. 18.

[22] R. Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[23] R. Kothari, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

the relationship between Hinduism and democracy: first, diversity is generally understood in group terms and is not a matter of individual choice; second, recognition of diversity does not prevent conflicts of interests which in both non-violent and violent forms have been a permanent feature of Indian (and any other, for that matter) politics.

The third important feature of politics in India is a tradition of consensus, going back as far as the Rigveda with its recommendation: "Assemble and discuss. Let your minds be of one accord. Our prayer is common, the Assembly is common, and the minds and hearts are united. In consensus of opinion united be the thoughts of all that may happily agree."[24] Nearer to our times, its roots can be traced to the pancahayats, originally bodies for the management of internal affairs of caste. In modern politics, it often levels off differences between parties with formally opposed ideologies. For example, research showed that at the grass-roots level over three quarters of the members of moderate and reformist Indian National Congress, militantly Jan Sangh, Socialists and Communists shared common attitudes to such issues, like state-owned industries, equitable distribution of, and ceiling on, land; taxation of higher incomes, the preservation of democratic rights even at the cost of economic progress[25] (Nageshwar Prasad, 1980, p. 132, 158–159, 283).

In the modern period, traditional political culture of India has been changing under the influence of various factors. The British Raj contributed to the spread of the liberal egalitarian ideas and introduced the basic principles of the rule of law. Mahatma Gandhi's vision of politics in religious and moral terms reinforced the trend of blending religion and politics, later pursued in a more radical way by various Hindu parties and organizations, promoting Hindu nationalism in order to neutralize the growth of 'regionalism', or ethnic nationalism of linguistic communities.

From the viewpoint of national integration, the principal conclusion is that Indians do have a common political culture. The authors of a study, based on field work and quantative analysis summed up their findings:

> [...] our analysis of political attitudes and cultural orientations reveals that there is much greater homogeneity than might be expected... [A]fter inspecting all these data, what strikes one is the remarkable similarity in cultural perspectives for all sectors of the population. It is basically a population which supports democratic parties and electoral institutions, which is developing knowledge about and interest in the system, while retaining a clear feeling of scepticism about the citizen's role in the system and is strongly "traditional" in orientation. It is this convergence of traditional and modern cultural inclinations which stands out in our data."[26]

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[24] P. D. Devanandan, M. M. Thomas (eds.), *Cultural Foundations of Indian Democracy*, Bangalore: The Committee for Literature on Social Concerns, 1955, p. 84.

[25] Nageshwar Prasad, *Ideology and Organization in Indian Politics (A Study of Political Parties at the Grass-Roots)*, New Delhi, etc.: Allied Publishers, 1980, pp. 132, 158–159, 283.

[26] J. Samuel. Eldersveld and Bashiruddin Ahmed, *Citizens and Politics. Mass Political Behavior in India*, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 12.

This conclusion seems valid in the case of later approaches to political culture, notably grid-group theory[27] that analyses political culture, using hierarchy, collectivism, individualism, and egalitarianism as reference points or types of political culture.

Political culture of a multiethnic state is likely to be homogeneous only to the extent that it has certain common traits or their combination, different from those in political cultures of ancient nations. Indian political culture is different from political cultures of the Middle East, Central Asia, and China. However, within India ethnoregional differences, e.g. between Southern states, especially Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and North India, West Bengal and the Punjab are quite obvious. It is for this reason that Indian political culture is an umbrella 'greater tradition' including modern elements, and providing basic points of reference for ethnoregional political subcultures as its component parts[28]. Regional differences are quite obvious and can be illustrated by references to the phenomenon of movie stars politics in South India, the strength of the Left parties in West Bengal and Kerala, religious issues in Punjab, and so on. However, it is only in non-Hindu majority states or regions that persistent secessionist movements have emerged – in Northeast India, Kashmir, and Punjab, while the Tamil DMK dropped its secessionist stance as soon as the Sixteenth Constitution Amendment prohibited activities against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India.

National Integration Policy

Positive perception of diversity, reconstructed historical memory (especially the 'golden age' myth and the symbols of the freedom struggle), common political culture are important prerequisites for national unity, but as such they are not sufficient to ensure it unless national integration is one of the cornerstones of the state policy. Since vast literature exists on this aspect of Indian politics, it seems sufficient at this point to mention the most important facts.

First, federal system of India proved to be a highly effective instrument to promote national integration. The initial purpose of the Government of India Act, 1935, was to integrate the princely states, but within a few years after Independence the federal set-up became instrumental in solving the ethnoregional grievances and claims, generated both by the patchwork territorial organization and the expectations of regional elites in the wake of independence. Regional pressures, the loss of electoral support of the ruling Indian National Congress in a number of Southern states during the general elections of 1952, and the creation

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[27] Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky, *Cultural Theory*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990; Dennis J. Coyle and Richard J. Ellis (eds.), *Politics, Policy, and Culture*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994.

[28] For more detail see Algis Prazauskas, "Ethnicity, Political Culture and National Integration in India and the USSR", Vitaly Naumkin (ed.), *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia. A Post-Soviet Critique*, Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993, p. 17–36.

of Andhra Pradesh state in 1953 set the chain of events that led to the emergence of linguistic states. Despite agitation and occasional clashes, reorganization was a success by any standards. After three years of intensive study and on-spot consultations, the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) presented a report that was a very balanced and by far the best assessment of ethnopolitical situation ever produced by any government anywhere. The circumstance that the reorganization of 1956 did not solve the problems of Bombay, Punjab and Northeastern region should not suggest that in terms of population and magnitude of the issue it was the most radical territorial reform of the last century. Contrary to pessimistic forecasts, creation of linguistic states was a major step in promoting political integration.

Second, the federal set-up was used to deal with separatist movements at the Northeastern periphery, a region beyond the pale of the Indian civilization and further isolated (by the introduction of Inner Line as a kind of internal frontier and the spread of Christianity among the Naga and Mizo tribes) during the British period. After years of protracted insurgency that could not be suppressed by police actions, the government opted for political solution by creating a number of small states in the region. This measure did not bring lasting peace to the region but it reduced the intensity of guerilla warfare and for the first time coopted a section of tribal leadership into the political system of India. During the last few years, several Union Territories became states, and some new states were carved out under the pressure of subregional constitutional movements.

Third, the government did not press for implementation of the constitutional clause proclaiming Hindi as the sole official language after 1965. This concession provided for more liberal language policy and facilitated the spread of Hindi beyond the Hindi belt. Occasional protests against 'Hindi imperialism', 'Delhi domination' or 'cultural imperialism of northern India' in the regional papers and even in scholarly articles[29] reflect emotional attitudes of particular intellectuals and are not representative of the general public opinion in the regions.

With a few exceptions, any modern state has sufficient resources and can rely upon the support of the international community of states to preserve its integrity.[30] The fact that despite immense problems, especially poverty, illiteracy, regional disparities, and communalism to name but a few, India has managed to deal with the issues of ethnoregional and cultural diversity fairly successfully by using mostly political and constitutional means, cannot be explained unless civilizational foundation of the modern Indian state is taken into account.

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[29] Sagarika Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

[30] A notable exception is the secession of Eritrea in 1993 in the context of the countrywide civil war in Ethiopia in 1977–1991. There are several more cases of separatist movements gaining actual control over the territory populated by minorities (e.g. in Sudan, Georgia, Moldova) but all these cases of de facto secession took place in extremely weak states and have not been recognized by the international community.

INDIJOS NACIONALINĖS INTEGRACIJOS CIVILIZACINIS PAGRINDAS

Algis Prazauskas

S a n t r a u k a

Civilizacijos samprata pastarąjį dešimtmetį buvo taikoma tarptautinių santykių studijoms ir tapo diskutuotinu politikos mokslų klausimu. Šiame straipsnyje mėginama panagrinėti sąsajas tarp civilizacijos ir daugiaetninės valstybės nacionalinės integracijos. Atsižvelgiant į istoriją, etnodemografinius duomenis bei kultūrinę įvairovę, Indijos atvejis yra išimtinis, tačiau dėl tų pačių priežasčių jis sudaro galimybę nustatyti sąsajas tarp specifinių civilizacijos bruožų ir viršetninės (indiškos) politinės kultūros, sudarančios vieną svarbiausių daugiaetninės valstybės gyvybingumo ir stabilumo prielaidų.