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## Formation of Linguistic states: Did it make or break the Country?

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*In India, Forming states on a linguistic basis is a major debated topic today. There are two sides: one argues that the linguistic formation of the state was necessary as the Country was in a vulnerable state after getting independence from the colonial giant and it was for the first time on its own, making its own rules and having its administration. Therefore, it was crucial to get the population settled in properly and have faith in the new administration, and to achieve that, linguistic formation was the only way. While others argue that this was just a political move in order to gain support from the populace and rather, it broke the unity in the country. Therefore, the paper aims to critically analyze the idea and present a case with evidence as to whether it was a good idea to divide the states in the country solely based on language. The researcher employs a comparative approach to analyze different countries' experiences that underwent linguistic organization. The paper also discusses the potential benefits and challenges of linguistic state reorganization. Potential challenges include cultural differences, a threat to Secular India, economic disparities and inter-linguistic conflicts. The paper mentions potential benefits like preserving cultural heritage, promoting local governance and the greater representation of linguistic communities. Ultimately, the paper focuses largely on the question of whether the formation of linguistic states has contributed to the unity and stability of the country or has led to fragmentation and division.*

**Keywords:** *division, inter-linguistic conflict, unity, diversity, country.*

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## INTRODUCTION

India has a rich culture, diversity is the country's foundation and the core of diversity is religion and language. Culture and artistic expression are unique to each language. They follow different traditions and customs as well. Children also receive instruction in these languages to learn them in school. To get complete knowledge, it is essential to provide schooling in the mother tongue. In general, fulfillment for humanity is the result and their protection is also required by numerous international conventions. One of the most basic human rights is the freedom of speech but because trade and migration do not recognize many languages, globalization has made them vulnerable.

After its Independence in 1947, the country was in a chaotic mess. There were communal differences that not only divided the land but also pitted people against each other and there was a definite linguistic divide between the people; Citizens searched for alternate affiliations based on familial kinfolk, caste, religion and language in a country where a national character was yet to be developed after the British adversary relinquished control. Many individuals died as a result of India and Pakistan's 1947 division.<sup>1</sup> The government feared that a larger linguistic split of the nation may undermine its cohesiveness and integrity. The nation needed to maintain its strength and resist any aggression threatening its harmony and tranquillity, but when the demand for a linguistic state increased, the government finally formed a JVP Committee. Still, the committee rejected the idea of division, stating it was not good for the Country at that moment in time. They mentioned that National peace and unity are of much more important than the demands of the citizens, and the formation of linguistic states was delayed. Ultimately in 1956, based on the recommendation of the State Reorganization Commission, 14 linguistic states were formed. The choice of linguistic states was prompted by the Soviet model of language policy, which advocated for fostering linguistic diversity inside the Soviet Union. The

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<sup>1</sup> Mahendra Prasad Singh, 'Reorganisation of States in India' (2008) 43(11) Economic and Political Weekly <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40277259>> accessed 22 July 2023

Indian government attempted to replicate this technique in order to maintain linguistic diversity, but reorganizing states along linguistic lines has proven a complicated process.<sup>2</sup>

The formation of linguistic states has been a controversial issue over the years. Many critique the decision was not to the country's benefit, and many support the idea stating it has preserved the cultural identity of the state.<sup>3</sup> The paper aims to provide contention from both sides and provides a critical analysis.

## HYPOTHESIS

- The formation of linguistic states has helped preserve cultural homogeneity and cultural identity.
- The formation of linguistic states has resulted in unequal sizes of jurisdiction and posed a threat to regionalism.
- The formation of linguistic states strengthens Indian Unity and the motto 'Unity in Diversity'.

## OBJECTIVES

- To research the linguistic development of Indian states.
- To comprehend the necessity of reorganizing States according to language.
- To evaluate how much the linguistic reorganization of the states contributed to India's preservation of unity.
- To investigate the implications of such formation in the current political environment.

## METHODOLOGY

This study's primary sources of information were the pre-existing literature and secondary data sources. The secondary data was gathered from various sources, including survey reports,

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<sup>2</sup> Andrea Graziosi, 'India and the Soviet Model: The Linguistic Reorganization and the Problem of Hindi' (2017) 35(1/4) Harvard Ukrainian Studies <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44983553>> accessed 22 July 2023

<sup>3</sup> 'Formation of Linguistic States, Strengthened the Cause of Indian Unity' (*Sleepy Class IAS*) <<https://sleepyclasses.com/formation-of-linguistic-states-strengthened-the-cause-of-indian-unity/>> accessed 22 July 2023

books, articles, and research papers published in journals. The research is primarily descriptive in nature.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Academics from various professions have thoroughly examined the complex and diverse process known as language-based state creation. In this literature review, the researcher has looked at some critical questions and debates in this study area.

One of the first and most influential studies on the formation of governments based on linguistic foundations is found in Noam Chomsky's book *Language and Politics*<sup>4</sup>, written by the renowned linguist and political scientist. In this essay, Chomsky argues that language, as a means of communication, has a considerable impact on social and political institutions. He contends that the division of governments along linguistic lines is a common and legitimate phenomenon since it allows people to express themselves in their native language and preserve their cultural identity.

The writings of the political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson provide a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge on the linguistic roots of state formation. In his groundbreaking book *Imagined Communities*<sup>5</sup>, Anderson explores how linguistic and cultural practices are employed to construct and maintain national identity. He argues that the growth of linguistic communities had a vital role in the emergence of nation-states and that language development is essential to forming national identity.

*Language and State Formation in Africa*<sup>6</sup> by Crawford Young, published in 1994: In this book, the role of language in developing African states is explored. Language has been crucial in defining African political identities, the author claims, and the colonial era had a significant impact on the linguistic landscape of the continent. The book also examines the challenges that

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<sup>4</sup> Noam Chomsky and Carlos Otero, *Language and Politics* (AK Press UK 2004)

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso 1990)

<sup>6</sup> Crawford Young, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa* (Cambridge University Press 1994)

might arise when a state has several official languages and the impact that language laws have on a nation's sense of unity.

The following is an excerpt from *Language and National Identity in Asia*<sup>7</sup> by Andrew Simpson, published in 2007: In this collection of essays, the relationship between language and national identity in several Asian nations is examined. The authors look into how language has been used to forge national identities and how language regulations have been implemented to either promote or inhibit linguistic diversity. The book also examines the challenges that might arise when a state has a number of official languages and the impact that language laws have on a nation's sense of unity.

In his well-known book *Thoughts on the Linguistic States*<sup>8</sup>, Ambedkar made the case for the trifurcation of Uttar Pradesh for three reasons in particular: to improve administrative efficiency, to lessen the disproportionate influence of such a large state on the polity, and to better protect minorities from the power of numerically preponderant majority communities.

## LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

Language is a potent indicator of societal and individual identity. It frequently leads to self-government claims and a need for national or community confirmation. Federations, which frequently have highly diverse populations, may find it particularly vital to include provisions for recognising and accommodating language variety. Linguistic diversity was frequently the driving force behind the importance of federalism in a nation's constitutional development or the country's founding principles.

Independent The foundation of India's federal system includes various institutional and procedural standards, laws, and programs and a division of authority and resources between the union (central) and state governments. One definition defines linguistic federalism as 'a significant component of India's postcolonial language regime. This can be attributed to two things: the substantial linguistic diversity of the nation and a crucial constitutional clause

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Simpson, *Language and National Identity in Asia* (Oxford University Press 2007)

<sup>8</sup> BR Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Linguistic States* (1955)

(Article 345)<sup>9</sup> that permits each of India's 28 states and eight union territories to choose one or more official languages. Hindi and English are the cross-regional official languages (Article 343)<sup>10</sup>. The 1956 States Reorganisation Act<sup>11</sup> altered the state boundaries. Most of the new state lines were determined by linguistic and geographic proximity. This method highlighted the significance of language as a key element of political and cultural identity, which significantly impacts the important areas of education, occupation, administration, economy, politics, art, and culture in the states and the nation as a whole.

## CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The 'official language' of the union is Devanagari-scripted Hindi, as stated in Article 343(1)<sup>12</sup>. All regional languages are regarded as national rather than foreign, so Hindi is designated as the 'official' rather than the 'national' language. The ultimate objective that must be reached throughout time is stated in Article 341(1)<sup>13</sup>.

The 15-year transition period was included in the Constitution because its creators wanted Hindi to be adopted gradually rather than right away. It was intended for Hindi to replace English as the Center's official language on January 26, 1965, with English remaining in use in the interim. As a result, for 15 years following the adoption of the Constitution, Article 343(2)<sup>14</sup>, among other things, permits the ongoing use of English for all official purposes of the Union.

According to Article 345<sup>15</sup>, a state may adopt Hindi or any other state-wide regional language by passing a law for official purposes. Article 345 is a discretionary clause. It does not indicate that English is completely forbidden after a state adopts Hindi or another language, invalidating any orders made or official actions taken in that language. Only if the State Legislature passes an explicit law specifically banning the use of the English language will that be feasible.

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<sup>9</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 345

<sup>10</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 343

<sup>11</sup> State Reorganization Act 1956

<sup>12</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 343(1)

<sup>13</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 341(1)

<sup>14</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 343(2)

<sup>15</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 345

The creation of a formula for the language to be used in inter-governmental communications was another difficulty, an issue that was unique to the federal government that the Constitution's framers faced. This became significant because different states could select different official languages. Therefore, according to Article 346<sup>16</sup>, unless two or more States agree to use Hindi for this purpose, communication between two States or between the Centre and a State should be conducted in the Centre's official language.

## LANGUAGE AND LAW

Difficult challenges occur when the subject of language is handled in the context of the law and the courts. The laws of India are uniform; they are fundamentally consistent; and decisions of one High Court may be freely cited in other High Courts. As a result, the topic of legal jargon becomes even more important. Citing precedents from this Court in other High Courts will be difficult if a High Court adopts the regional tongue. The Supreme Court would have trouble operating if the High Court chose different languages.

According to Article 348(1)<sup>17</sup>, proceedings in the Supreme Court and a High Court must be conducted in English unless otherwise specified by Parliament. The use of Hindi or any other official language of the State may be authorized by the Governor of a State with the prior consent of the President in High Court proceedings as an exception to the general rule stated above, but not in the judgments, decrees, or orders passed by the court, which must be in English following Article 348(1).

The consequences of Article 348(2)<sup>18</sup> were discussed by the Supreme Court in *Vijay Laxmi Sadho v Jagdish*<sup>19</sup>. Any election petition submitted to the M.P. High Court was required by rule to be prepared in English. As a result, the High Court dismissed a Hindi-language election petition. The High Court was not allowed to do so, according to the Supreme Court. The High Court rules only set forth procedural rules; they do not create 'substantive law'. Article 348(2)

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<sup>16</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 346

<sup>17</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 348(1)

<sup>18</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 348(2)

<sup>19</sup> *Vijay Laxmi Sadho v Jagdish* (2001) AIR 2001

must be followed when interpreting the regulations. The regulations established by the High Court in the course of acting in accordance with Article 225<sup>20</sup> are strictly procedural and do not amount to substantive law. The application of the constitutional provisions provided in Article 348(2) is unaffected by these limitations. Because an election petition may be submitted in Hindi at the M.P. High Court, the court was unable to dismiss it at the threshold for failing to follow the High Court's rules.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Linguistic States protect cultural homogeneity -

India's diversity when it comes to background, faith, and language distinguishes it as a country. India's linguistic variety has played a significant role in the development of the Indian state. In an effort to give language minorities in India status and self-determination, linguistic states were created. Following the establishment of states based on linguistics, the path to leadership and politics had opened up to those speaking indigenous languages instead of the relatively small class of people who are fluent in English or the region of India that speaks primarily Hindi. The several cultural groups that make up India's states have seen their geographical characteristics strengthen the country's linguistic reorganisation. As a result, Indian federalism has improved. The establishment of linguistic states was viewed as an essential step in fostering the nation's cultural and linguistic variety.<sup>21</sup> The purpose of this was to offer linguistic minorities an opportunity to participate in politics and a feeling of belonging and self-identification. In addition, the concept of regionalism and separatism, which were considered threats to the nation's integrity and cohesiveness, was addressed through the creation of linguistic states.

The linguistic states put an end to the centrifugal pressure and expanding tendencies that could have led to linguistic divisions in the nation. Additionally, it has facilitated the growth of

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<sup>20</sup> Constitution of India 1950, art 225

<sup>21</sup> Veeraiah Konduri, 'Principle of Linguistic States in India - Its Historical Setting - A Special reference to Formation of State of Andhra Pradesh' (2010) 34(3) Oceania

<[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230727755\\_Principle\\_of\\_Linguistic\\_States\\_in\\_India\\_-\\_Its\\_Historical\\_Setting\\_-\\_A\\_Special\\_reference\\_to\\_Formation\\_of\\_State\\_of\\_Andhra\\_Pradesh](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230727755_Principle_of_Linguistic_States_in_India_-_Its_Historical_Setting_-_A_Special_reference_to_Formation_of_State_of_Andhra_Pradesh)> accessed 16 July 2023



regional languages and the delivery of education in them, improving the nation's overall literacy rate. An educated citizen is always a better citizen.

It has strengthened the nation's unity by enabling citizens to realize their desire for independent political groups to govern, allowing for the preservation of regional festivals, culture, and customs. The diverse traditions of the many Indian states have grown to be cherished by the nation's citizens.<sup>22</sup>

## **2. Linguistic States have added to regionalism -**

Today, 75 years after India's independence, it is verifiable that the emergence of linguistic states contributed to developing another rift in India's unity. While India continues to experience a protracted series of language wars between and within the States, politicians will stop at nothing to polarise the situation further. The establishment of linguistic states aimed to accommodate the nation's linguistic diversity, but this has instead resulted in the rise of linguistic minorities in each State who believe that the dominant linguistic group is threatening their survival.

Conflicts based on languages have also arisen as a result of the establishment of linguistic states, such as when linguistic minorities call for the creation of independent states. Violence and unrest have resulted as a result in various areas of the nation. People now identify more with their language and cultural identities than with the more critical Indian identity, which has resulted in the formation of linguistic and cultural silos. Area political parties have now emerged; as a result, frequently focusing on particular area interests rather than the more potent national concerns.

The homogenization and standardization of these States' languages have resulted in linguistic and cultural inequality, which has a direct impact on how different groups participate in governance. As a result, the politicians now have the opportunity to leverage the current

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<sup>22</sup> Shahid Parvez, 'Linguistic States & the Language Policy in India' (SSRN, 09 November 2009) <<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1502779>> accessed 16 July 2023

contradiction in electoral politics. The development of linguistic states thus failed to achieve its primary goal and instead laid the path for opportunistic identity politics.<sup>23</sup>

Gandhi felt that uniting the populace into uniform, self-sufficient groups would guarantee their active participation in the war for liberation. Gandhi may have had the best of intentions, but his beliefs had a fundamental flaw that gave those who spoke different languages a sense of superiority. The recent emergence of Telangana as a separate geographical and political entity in 2014 is consistent with the persistence of such polarising forces today. Sandeep Balakrishna, an independent scholar, and author, believes that 'we have reached a stage where almost every state has become a war zone, and the divisive states of India are waging an unhinged, all-out war against the Indian Union'. It would only be appropriate to cite him on this topic.

India contains 1599 other languages and dialects in addition to its 122 significant languages, according to the 2001 Census of India. The linguistic objectives of all parties cannot be satisfied. For instance, the proposal for redistributing Maharashtra and Karnataka's borders based on language is pending. Karnataka and Maharashtra are engaged in a political battle over the Belagavi problem. A six-decade-old boundary dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra has been centred on Belagavi, a region of Karnataka with a sizable 'Marathi-speaking' population; the Supreme Court's verdict is still pending.

Linguistic states have enhanced some groups' political narratives, enabling them to advance regionalism and foster a sense of distinct identity in opposition to the nation's unity and integration. States with diverse linguistic populations have fueled regionalism. India is still developing as a nation. Hence its subnational sentiments are valued above Indian unity and integrity<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Mrinal Rai, 'The Formation of Linguistic States – Upholding Diversity or Engendering Division?' (*Hindu College Gazette*, 01 November 2022) <<https://www.hinducollegegazette.com/post/the-formation-of-linguistic-states-upholding-diversity-or-engendering-division>> accessed 16 July 2023

<sup>24</sup> Dr Vidya Hattangadi, 'Indian States Formed on the Basis of Languages Has Weakened National Integration' (*Dr Vidya Hattangadi*, 20 February 2023) <<https://drvidyahattangadi.com/indian-states-formed-on-the-basis-of-languages-has-weakened-national-integration/>> accessed 16 July 2023

India's regional development has been divided. States like Bihar, Odisha, and Chattisgarh are home to low-income individuals, while states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu are distinguished by high-income residents. The concern is that over the past many decades, the ratio of affluent, developed states to poor, underdeveloped states has stayed substantially unchanged. Today State disputes over language have arisen, linguistic minorities are now seen as aliens, and their liberties are being repressed. On the subject of language, there is division among groups of people, endangering the fundamental unity of India.

### **3. Linguistic States have promoted Unity in the Country -**

The linguistic state reorganization in India moved the country closer to recognizing linguistic diversity. The decision to reorganize states based on linguistic strains sought to strike a compromise between increasing linguistic diversity and preserving a unified national identity. This reorganization was founded entirely on the concept that language is a crucial problem of identification and culture. Acknowledging this variety may result in a more inclusive and peaceful society<sup>25</sup>. The impact of the Soviet Union's language policy on India's language laws and nation reorganization emphasizes the relevance of external trends in molding political and social systems. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, was crucial in the linguistic nation-building process.

The most contentious topic in India's first 20 years of independence was the language question, which led many to fear that the nation's political and cultural unity was jeopardized. Nehru pledged to establish linguistically-based republics during the freedom movement to give every community an equal opportunity to advance and realize their own dreams while operating under the control of the central government. The issue was then rectified by the states' linguistic reorganization. The federal system of the country was unaffected, and the center was not weakened. According to some academics, creating states based on language was the only way to preserve national unity.<sup>26</sup> As demonstrated by the creation of Bihar as an independent state

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<sup>25</sup> Parvez (n 22)

<sup>26</sup> Sujit Choudhry, 'Managing Linguistic Nationalism through Constitutional Design: Lessons from South Asia' (2009) 7(4) International Journal of Constitutional Law

<<https://academic.oup.com/icon/article/7/4/577/733731>> accessed 16 July 2023

in 1912, even the British government in India acknowledged that language and culture may serve as the basis for reorganising the states throughout the British Empire.

Forming states on a linguistic basis has aided in the common belief that is the country's foundation - Unity in Diversity. The language basis for governmental partition eliminated the primary source of interpersonal conflict and strife. For instance, separating Andhra from Madras responds to Telugu-speaking people's anger and protest.

States can establish their official languages, and all levels of government could operate more effectively. The government has been able to better communicate with the populace in a language they can comprehend because of the creation of homogeneous states that have enhanced state functioning. Education is provided in a student's preferred mother tongue, scientifically demonstrated to improve critical thinking and analysis. Mother language made mass literacy feasible. This has been one of the most crucial benefits of forming linguistic states.

## CONCLUSION

The cause of Indian unity has benefited and suffered from the emergence of linguistic states. While it has aided in preserving and promoting the nation's cultural diversity, it has also sparked the rise of regionalism and linguistic chauvinism. Finding a balance between fostering linguistic and cultural variety and upholding the nation's unity and integrity presents a problem for India. It is crucial to understand that India's diversity, of which linguistic diversity is a crucial component, gives the country its power. By appreciating and embracing this diversity, India can fortify its unity and grow into a robust and thriving country.

Additionally, one might argue that the creation of linguistic states was a historical mistake that cannot be undone. It has irrevocably impacted the nation's core sense of cohesiveness. India's national identity has been shaped in part by its languages. To preserve India's linguistic and cultural diversity, multilingualism is both a distinctive and intrinsic trait of the country and a requirement. It is important to tell India's story in the twenty-first century from the viewpoint of a multilingual country that is becoming more diverse, inclusive, and inventive, where

possibilities for socioeconomic growth for all people and political stability uphold democratic values.

The researcher of the paper believes that the formation of states is a complicated issue, and it has had both negative and positive impacts on the Country's future. On the one hand, it has promoted Social Unity, Cultural homogeneity, and cultural identity. It has made the citizens of India realize that the Government is concerned with their needs and is working for the betterment of the citizens. And on the other hand, unconsciously, it has resulted in regionalism in the Country. People of any linguistic background are only concerned and interested in developing their Language or their region but not the Country as a whole. Therefore, India still has a chance and a long way to go to create a balance between the positives and the negatives to develop the country and to push the Country to reach new heights.