

Sub-National Movements, Cultural Flow, the Modern State and the Malleability of Political Space: From Rational Choice to Transcultural Perspective and Back Again

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Introduction

Using the Telengana movement in South India as a template, this article juxtaposes two methods of analysing the phenomenon of sub-national movements (a special type of ethno-national movement) within the larger framework of the challenge of state-formation and nation-building in multi-ethnic, post-colonial states.¹ The methods are as follows: first, explanatory models based on conventional tools of comparative politics such as conflicts of interest, fixed national and regional boundaries, and the strategic manoeuvres of political leaders and their followers. Second, a transcultural approach that draws on political perceptions and behaviour influenced by deep memory, cultural flow, and the hybridisation of indigenous and imported categories. This article applies these methods to the Telengana movement in South India, first, within the theoretical perspective of the rational politics of cultural nationalism, and then extending the method to introduce explanatory phenomena that belong more broadly to the transcultural approach. Though the empirical exemplars are drawn mostly from India, the method is applicable to the wider world of sub-national challenges to the modern state.

Sub-national movements belong to the generic category of collective efforts used to assert cultural nationalism in a territorial space that corresponds to a homeland that its advocates strongly believe to be legitimately theirs. Typically,

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies, Honolulu, March 31–April 3, 2011. I would like to thank the ‘Excellence Cluster: Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows’, Heidelberg, for a grant to participate in the conference; Lion Koenig, Radu Carciumaru, and Dominik Frommherz for their valuable research assistance, Philipp Stockhammer, Christine Sanchez-Stockhammer, and two anonymous referees for *Transcultural Studies* for their critical engagement with an earlier draft, and to Andrea Hacker for her meticulous attention to style and syntax. However, since I have been selective in the incorporation of comments, I alone am responsible for the opinions expressed here.

these movements question the fixed character of nations and central states as they strike out into their own living space. They draw their support from the affinity that their supporters feel with a particular language, religion, ethnicity, region, or a deeply felt sense of collective grievance. The standard approach of comparative politics is to depict sub-national movements as political movements that arise typically from a conflation of identity and material interests. Such movements gather force when the leading initiators succeed in attracting sympathisers from the “imagined community” that corresponds to the cultural catchment. Central states resist the growth and contest the claims to legitimacy of such movements in the name of what sub-nationalists see as outmoded nationalism, but eventually, when they cannot be subdued, central states negotiate with the leadership of the sub-nationalist movement. Once sub-nationalists succeed in gaining power (through democratic elections or a negotiated transfer of power) *banalisation* of the original idea that generated the movement sets in. In India, this phase usually takes the form of the creation of new federal States where the leaders of the movement become office-holders in a new territorial unit.

This ‘rational politics of cultural nationalism’ approach within contemporary Indian politics is partially challenged by the emergence of new movements that arise, phoenix-like, from the debris of previous sub-nationalist movements that have already gone through a full life cycle. The agitation for a separate Telengana State, which its proponents wish to be carved out of Andhra Pradesh, the outcome of one of the first sub-national movements in India, thus forms a counter-factual that challenges established positivist methods of explanation and points toward a transcultural approach.²

The puzzle

Since decolonisation and the Transfer of Power to modern post-colonial states, South Asia has seen a frequent occurrence of separatist movement, which has resulted in violent struggles to assert control over parts of the existing state

2 The concept of “transculturality” is owed largely to the work of Wolfgang Welsch (1999), who sees it as the only conceptual means of describing the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures. As opposed to what Welsch refers to as “the old concept of culture,” transculturality—which is by no means a historically new phenomenon—draws a picture of the relationship between cultures that is marked by “entanglement, intermixing, and commonness” arising from increased contact and cultural exchange. This approach has been further developed by the members of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context.” The Cluster’s current approach differs from Welsch in three crucial points: phenomena such as border-crossings and cultural mixing are not understood as unique attributes of modernity, but as intrinsic to culture whose historical dimensions go as far back as recorded history; the focus of the analytical approach lies on issues of processuality, and, lastly, there is no assumption of an automatic equivalence between the transcultural and the syncretic/cosmopolitan”. See Monica Juneja, “Key Term: Transculturality” (unpublished manuscript, December 6, 2011).

territory in the name of a separate and unique identity. The main driving force behind these movements originates from the shared belief in a unique and distinct cultural identity, which justifies the right to an exclusive homeland. The precise moment when such movements break out is influenced by their leaders' perception of the structures of available opportunity as well as the central state's capacity to contain them. In this sense these sub-national movements are a special form of cultural nationalism that embodies the dynamism of identity-formation and, consequently, questions the rigidity of the existing political boundaries staunchly defended by the central state in the name of modernity and rational administration.³

In a previous article⁴ I attempted to explain the origin and evolution of sub-national movements within the framework of the 'rational politics' of cultural nationalism. I argued that the cause and unfolding of such movements can be modelled on the critical nodal points of their life-cycles with the rational (instrumental) manipulation of sentiments and interests by the proponents of sub-nationalism and the reaction of the central state leading to the evolution of the movement from one stage to another (see Figure 1, below). Depending on the ability of the central state to combine violent suppression with an electoral alternative and the potential offer of carving out a territorial niche for the concerned population, the article predicted that sub-national movements eventually subside or become banalised,⁵ leaving behind only a residual

3 There is a fine line between cultural nationalism as a genre and sub-nationalism as a specific type within this broader category. Whereas cultural nationalism questions the totality of a given concept of nationalism and postulates its own, distinct and different concept, sub-nationalists do not necessarily question the idea of the nation but wish instead to find a more just and honourable position for themselves within the national space that involves having distinct political and territorial autonomy. Thus, whereas cultural nationalism might lead to a split of the existing nation state, sub-nationalism can be very well resolved within a federal arrangement. In practice, this distinction sometimes breaks down. Thus, the sub-nationalist Bengali language movement of the 1950s in East Pakistan eventually became a full-fledged cultural nationalist movement leading to the breakdown of Pakistan in 1971. A similar situation can be seen in the Eelam movement for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka. Which course a movement takes depends on a large cluster of factors, discussed below.

4 See Subrata K. Mitra, "Rational Politics of Cultural Nationalism," *The British Journal of Political Science* vol. 25 no.1 (Jan 1995): 57-77.

5 This is a concept that Michael Billig uses to stretch the concept of nationalism, "so that it can cover the ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced. To stretch the term 'nationalism' indiscriminately would invite confusion: surely, there is a distinction between the flag waved by Serbian ethnic cleansers and that handed unobtrusively outside the US post office; or between the policy of the Front National and the support given by the leader of the opposition to the British government's Falkland policy. For this reason, the term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition." Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: Sage, 1995), 6.

memory of struggle. Once successfully inducted into office, rebels become stakeholders and the transcendental politics of blood, sweat, and tears is replaced by more banal transactions around who should hold office, for how long, and what kind of deals can be brokered to transform electoral power into material rewards.⁶

While the predictions of this model have held true for some of India's major sub-national movements such as those leading to the creation of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Orissa, just to name a few, the currently raging Telengana movement, seeking to carve out a State of Telengana (see Map 1 below) is a conspicuous challenge to the predictive capacity of the model. Students of the comparative politics of cultural nationalism, and those specialising in state formation in post-colonial societies, need to pay special attention to the ongoing movement for a separate Telengana State (see Table 2 for the chronology of the Telengana movement) because this is a case of sub-nationalism that has arisen, to all appearances, with renewed vigour, from the ashes of its predecessors and from within a space that already witnessed a similar struggle to create the Telugu speaking State of Andhra Pradesh.⁷

Some of the scenes of intense rhetoric and violent action that mark the Telengana movement are reminiscent of the original Telugu movement for the creation of a Telugu speaking State (see Table 2 below). Why has the genie been let out of the bottle again? What are the implications of this phenomenon for the 'theory' of the 'rational' politics of cultural nationalism? What policy can one recommend to the modern nation-state besieged by the challenge of sub-nationalism? What are the implications of the resurrection of this past political agenda for the conventional theory that predicted the dissolution of such movements within the modern state once an appropriate deal was struck? Does the theory need to be junked in light of this counter-example, or is it possible to salvage it by adding some additional parameters to the original explanatory model? Which additional insights or variables do the theatrics

6 See Figure 1 below for the stages of the development of sub-national movements.

7 The following report in the press gives one a sense of the agitation. "The 'Million March' to Hyderabad, called by pro-Telengana groups and supported by political parties on Thursday, turned violent as thousands of agitators broke through police barricades to reach the Tank Bund here, where they went berserk. The crowds set fire to an OB van of a Telugu news channel and a police jeep and damaged windcreens of two other police vehicles. Eight policemen were injured in stone throwing. The mobs singled out Congress MPs K. KeshavaRao and MadhuYashkiGoud for attack and hurled footwear, water bottles and food sachets at them. [...] Seven statues of eminent Telugu personalities erected on the Tank Bund when N.T.Rama Rao was Chief Minister were vandalised and one uprooted statue was thrown into the Hussain Sagar lake." See "'Million March' turns violent in Hyderabad: pro-Telengana agitators go berserk, vandalise statues," *The Hindu*, March 11, 2011, <http://www.hindu.com/2011/03/11/stories/20110311>

of Telengana (see Fig. 1 again) likerail roko,⁸ showcasing old grievances and memories as a spectacular act of *re-use*,⁹ provide? Does the Telengana exemplar contribute to a revised theory of sub-nationalist movements in a post-colonial context? And finally, what policy implications can we glean from the Telengana movement with regard to the Indian state that will make the rise of Telengana-like movements either unlikely or at least negotiable within the framework of the modern, liberal democratic state?



Map 1: Contours of a prospective state of Telengana

The ‘rational’ politics of cultural nationalism

The tactics of leaders of sub-nationalist movements typically consist of drawing on a dormant yearning for a separate identity backed by a specific political space—either exclusive or at least dedicated—that they can call their own, and the strategies they follow to reach these goals. These political actors

8 Literally means “stop trains.” This is an innovative and mostly peaceful method of putting pressure on the government by obstructing the movement of trains. Rasta roko—stop traffic on highways—is a variation of the same method.

9 *Re-use* refers to a form of relationship between the past and the present wherein elements from the past are strategically adapted for the present, and thus become part of a new modernity. Re-use, in this sense, is a heuristic tool for analysing and interpreting cultural and political changes and the transnational flow of ideas, concepts, and objects. By not treating artistic, political, religious, and cultural developments as linear evolution, re-use as concept and method encourages readers to understand history as a continuous modification of the past and a periodic return to earlier forms. See Julia Hegewald and Subrata Mitra, eds. *Re-use: the Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety* (Delhi: Sage, 2012).

(political entrepreneurs par excellence) combine rational protest with channels of participation that are open to all such as voting, lobbying, contacting, and campaign contributions for maximum effect. Their mixed strategy thus resembles the efforts of fund managers who seek to diversify their portfolios as they mix low-risk, low-yield and high-risk, high-yield investments.¹⁰ In this game between the central state and the sub-nationalists to gain the upper hand, both nationalist entrepreneurs and the state tend to manipulate the subjective perception of probabilities by using identity formation and constitution-making as political resources. Using these notions and the evidence gleaned from concrete examples, my earlier work on this problem has postulated the following hypotheses:

- (1) *The greater the ideological distance between the position of the central state or the dominant social group identified with the position of the state and the values salient for the sub-nationalists, the more intense the attachment to their own identity and values and to the desire for an autonomous homeland where those values can be actualised.*
- (2) *The greater the disparity in the levels of material affluence between an area with a culturally cohesive population and the rest of the population of the state, the greater the sentiments against those forms of political discrimination that are seen as responsible for the difference.*
- (3) *The greater the exclusion of sub-regional social elites from the ranks of the national ruling elite, the greater the likelihood of the outbreak of sub-nationalism.*

In the presence of any of the above conditions, the following factors are sufficient to help transform the sentiments of cultural nationalism into a political movement for a separate homeland:

- (4) *Weakening central rule.*
- (5) *Geopolitical conditions helpful to separatists such as the expression of symbolic or material support by neighbouring countries and an international climate favourable to their cause.*
- (6) *A social network that can be transformed into a political organisation capable of facilitating co-ordination among sub-nationalist leaders, generating symbolic and material support for the 'cause' and acting as a vigilante organisation to punish defectors.*

¹⁰ Field data from India reveals the tendency on the part of local elites to combine strategies of contacting civil servants and putting pressure on them by taking recourse to protest action in their attempts to maximise their share of developmental benefits. Although it is risky to engage in protest action, when it is effective it can quickly mobilise the media, higher level political leaders, and civil servants and lead to prompt action.

These factors are additive; that is, the probability of growth in sub-nationalism is highest when several factors cumulate, whereas the probability is lower when some of the factors are absent.

In an ideal type scenario (a sub-national movement drawing on the six conditions given above), the unfolding of sub-national movements is conceptualised in terms of five stages (see Figure 1). This five-stage life cycle starts (Time t_1) with a few highly motivated leaders in the movement (more a cultural initiative than a social movement at the outset) who are willing in their rhetoric to “risk their lives for the cause,” and who seek to mobilise the “imagined community” that underpins the homeland they aspire to. As their numbers grow, and by the time the originators have moulded the cultural impulses to a social movement (time t_2), average intensity has declined because not all are willing to “kill or die.” The distinguishing feature of this stage is that there is the semblance of an organisation to sustain the momentum. Time t_3 is yet another critical moment when the movement is on the threshold of electoral/political recognition as a contender for power. By the time numbers climb higher and the movement has turned into a party or an organised group engaged in electoral competition or some form of power-sharing arrangement (time t_4), it has acquired the paraphernalia of an organisation, including the funds and the rituals of office. In the final stage (t_5), the movement is a thing of the past that the office-holding leaders evoke as they continue the task of transforming power into policy and rewards, all the while remaining ensconced within a new territorial unit that is the home of the imagined community.

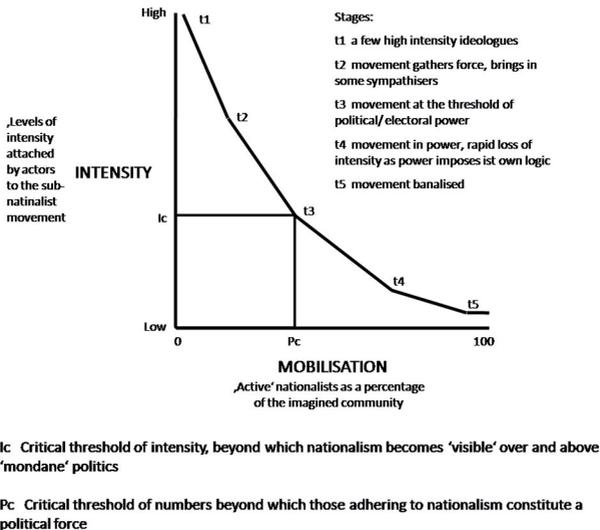


Fig. 1: An ideal type life cycle of sub-national movements

The political landscape of South Asia is rife with examples that illustrate this ideal type, which can manifest itself in different forms depending on the context. Thus, Sri Lankan Tamils responded to the growing Sinhala self-assertion and discriminatory legislation through a violent sub-nationalist movement in favour of a Tamil homeland. That movement led by the LTTE, came to an abrupt end at time t_3 , when the central state changed its strategy from ‘fight and talk’ to full-scale warfare. In contrast, the Indian Tamils, similarly concerned about the status of their language and culture vis-à-vis the nationally dominant status of Hindi, have successfully achieved the hegemonic status of Tamil in the Indian State of Tamil Nadu. The hypotheses (4) and (5) suggest facilitating conditions that affect the strategic thinking of sub-nationalist leaders. The perceived strength or weakness of the regimes in Colombo or New Delhi was a crucial factor in the calculation of militant Tamils and Sikhs: the help they could expect from public opinion and sanctuaries in India and Pakistan respectively were important for their activities.¹¹ The sixth hypothesis identifies organisational resources like social networks that can help in self-policing and punishing defectors in a number of ways that range from social boycotts to more extreme forms, including execution.

The focus of the ideological battle between the national government and sub-nationalists centres on how a ‘mere threat to law and order’ acquires the more dignified title of a sub-nationalist movement. In order to understand how this crucial transformation in the perceptions of a movement’s followers and adversaries comes about we must take into consideration two important factors—namely, the material factors that influence the trajectories of the sub-nationalist movement, and the price their protagonists are obliged to pay for their eventual political success.

Political leaders, acting in the name of sub-nationalism, draw on both nationalist sentiments and material interests to generate a movement for a separate homeland. The precise mix of these two sets of motives depends on the political context. Factors that influence the evolution of the movement include the degree of resentment against central rule, the salience attached to a separate and distinct cultural identity, and the availability of a geo-strategic window of opportunity for the leaders to put these political resources to effective use.

This appearance of shared political ideals enhances the perception of sub-nationalism as a legitimate tactic; that it is simply one option among many that

11 See Gurharpal Singh, “The Punjab Crisis since 1984: A Re-assessment,” in *Sub-national Movements in South Asia* eds. Subrata K. Mitra and Alison Lewis (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996) for the strategic aspects of the movement for Khalistan.

are open to political entrepreneurs —a politically convenient self-classification to obtain material resources rather than a social movement with an intrinsic and unique cultural substance. As long as the forces of an occupying foreign power were visibly in control, these local and regional forces were accorded a position of dignity by nationalist leaders within the broad church of the anti-colonial struggle. However, once the foreign colonial rulers left and power passed to the hands of the national leaders, a struggle broke out between the new central authorities and their regional adversaries (A selected set of cases is presented in Table 1).

Transcendental objective	Territorial Aspiration	Social Bases and markers of identity
Tamil nationalism	Sovereign Tamil Elam (Sri Lanka/current) Autonomous Tamil Nadu (India/achieved)	Tamil popular culture
Sikh identity	Sovereign Khalistan (dormant)	Sikh religion, Punjabi language, Gurmukhi script, <i>gurdwaras</i> , overseas Sikh communities
Kashmiri identity	Undivided Kashmir (current)	<i>Kashmiriyat</i> , Islam
Naga nationalism	Autonomous Nagaland (achieved)	Tribal network, Christian missionaries
Mizo Nationalism	Autonomous Mizoram (achieved)	Tribal network, missionaries
Gorkha identity	Autonomous Gorkhaland (achieved)	Tribal network
Jharkhand culture and interests	Autonomous Jharkhand	Tribal network

Table 1: Social anchors of sub-national movements: selected examples from South Asia

The forms this struggle has taken have varied over time. Sometimes, certain activists sought to further their material interests and political careers; at other times, activism ‘within the movement’ has been perceived as a valued objective in its own right. The former motive is instrumental, the normal tool of trade in transactional politics. The latter is transcendental in the sense that the

promotion of and identification with values such as language, religion, ethnic bonds of community, and tribe present a compelling basis of identification and political action that overrides all other considerations. The typical sub-nationalist movement combines both transactional and transcendental elements in a complex repertoire, the composition of which is influenced by a range of factors that are explored below.

The cases presented in Table 1 do not constitute an exhaustive list of sub-national movements in South Asia. Rather, they are intended to illustrate the main types of movements based on the variations in their principal objectives, territorial aspirations, social anchors, and political trajectories.¹² Thus, Tamil nationalism is content to confine its territorial aspiration to the status of an autonomous region in India but is also engaged in fighting a violent secessionist war against the state in Sri Lanka. In contrast, the violent struggle for an independent Kashmir aspires to unite the two parts of Kashmir in India and Pakistan respectively, embodying the spirit of Kashmiriyat—the unique Kashmiri identity—that is putatively the basis of Kashmiri sub-nationalism. The Naga, Mizo, and Gorkha struggles have found territorial solutions to their aspiration for cultural identity within the Indian Union as constituent States, and the Jharkhand movement has mobilised agitation amongst tribal groups to reach a similar objective. The precursors to these contemporary movements can be found in the rise of Telugu and Tamil nationalism in India during the 1950s; in the growth of Bengali separatism in Pakistan during the late 1960s; and in the movement for Elam in northern Sri Lanka during the 1970s. In each case, the movements established their initial *raison d'être* by successfully supplanting the transactional basis of politics with the transcendental value of cultural identity.¹³ The central focus of these disparate movements is their assertion of a collective cultural identity within a territorial state. However, their social bases, agendas, and political strategies changed in reaction to the results they achieved—or failed to deliver. The significant difference to note between the Telengana movement and the category of sub-national movements is that it seeks to emerge from a space that had been claimed earlier by the advocates of Telugu-speaking people, a language shared with the supporters of Telengana. A brief chronology of the Telengana movement (Table 2) will help put the current developments into context.

12 See Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, (London: Duckworth, 1971), 214, 226 and 228–9 for typologies of nationalist movements.

13 For a distinction between transactional and transcendental factors in Indian politics, see Subrata Mitra, “Between Transaction and Transcendence: The State and the Institutionalisation of Authority in India,” in *The Post-colonial State in Asia: The Dialectics of Politics and Culture*, ed. Subrata Mitra, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

Date	Political development	Comment
December 1952	Potti Sriraulu died due to a political motivated fasting	hartals and disturbance reach climax
1 st Oct. 1953	Inauguration of new state- Andhra Pradesh	“One language one State policy” prepared by the State Reorganization Commission
1956	“Gentlemen’s agreement of Andhra Pradesh (1956)” signed by leaders from Andhra and Telengana which provides guarantees for Telengana	Agreement shall provide guarantees for Telengana. Agreement not honoured
1969	Students agitations for a separate state	impetus and leadership for separatist agitations comes from ‘dissident’ factions of Congress- not from opposition parties! ¹⁴
May-June 1969	NGOs went on an indefinite strike, paralyzing district administration; students boycotted colleges and universities in Telengana	Initially no professional politicians involved in agitation (movement character)
1969 and 1973	Agitations for separate states	impetus and leadership for separatist agitations comes from ‘dissident’ factions of Congress – not from opposition parties!
1969	Telengana Praja Samithi (TPS). Party formed by young lawyers, teachers and journalists. Chenna Reddy becomes leader	Purpose: coordinating activities of students and non-gazette officers (NGOs)

August 1969	Agitation begins to wear out	Fears of some in the TPS that professional politicians, who took over leadership, would use the movement in their factional struggles came true.
Oct. 1972	Supreme Court judgement- 'Mulki rules legally valid'	While welcomed in the Telengana region, Andhra students reacted swiftly to the judgment by organizing meetings and strikes urging that the Mulki rules should be scrapped if the integrity of the State should be preserved
1973	In the aftermath of the Jai Andhra Movement . P. V. Narasimha Rao resigns as Chief minister of Andhra Pradesh on January 10, 1973.	President's rule was declared in the state. ¹⁵
Sept. 21 st 1973	"Six Point Formula"	Purpose: rendering the continuance of Mulki rules and Regional Committee for Telengana unnecessary
1973	Constitutional Amendment (Art 317D, 317E)	give effect to the Six Point Formula
1983	Telugu Desam Party comes to power.	TDP pro united Andhra Pradesh (Telugu pride and unity of Telugu-speaking people)
1988	BJP's campaign in Lok Sabha election for a separate Telengana State	'Give one vote and take two States'

1990s	After a long pause the “movement” comes to life again	re-animated not from bottom but by a initiative of central leadership (Independence Day address in 1996- Deve Gowda announced formation of Uttaranchal)
1996	left-minded intellectuals and social activists come together to renew the work for a separate state	Bottom up character re-activated
2000	Creation of Jharkand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarkhand	Developments revitalise separatist Telengana movement ¹⁶
2001	Formation of a new Party: Telengana Rashra Samiti (TRS) lead by K. Chandrashekhar Rao (KCR)	KCR left TDP for creating TRS with a single point agenda: securing separate state.
2004	Congress forms electoral alliance with TRS for Assembly and Parliament elections	Promise of a separate Telengana State
2006	TRS withdraws from Congress support	Reason: alleged indecision by the government over the delivery of electoral promise.
Oct. 9 th 2008	Historical turnaround from its 26-year history TDP announces support for the creation of Telengana	
Feb. 2009	Declaration by state government: No objections to the formation of separate Telengana.	“Time had come to move forward decisively in this issue.”

¹⁶ Telangana Issue <http://www.theindiadaily.com/telangana-issue/>

2009	All major parties in Andhra Pradesh support the formation of Telengana	General Elections scheduled for 2009
Nov. 29 th 2009	TRS president K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) starts fast-unto-death	Purpose: Congress shall introduce a Telengana bill in the Parliament
Dec. 6 th , 7 th 2009	Telengana strikes shut down	
Dec. 9 th 2009	P. Chidambaram (Union Minister of Home Affairs) announces that the Indian government would start the process of forming a separate state.	KCR thus ends his 11 day fast.
Dec. 23 rd 2009	Government of India: No action on Telengana until a formal consensus is reached by all parties	
Jan. 5 th 2010	Home Minister invites for an all-party meeting to elicit views of all parties in the State.	Rallies, hunger strikes, suicides continue, sometimes turning violent.
Jan 28 th 2010	The all-party Telengan Joint Action Committee (JAC) starts relay hunger strikes.	
Feb. 12 th 2010	Central government announces Terms of Reference to B.N. Srikrishna Committee with a deadline of Dec. 31. 2010	Telengan- JAC rejects the terms of reference, saying that it 'undid' Union home minister's statement in New Delhi on Dec. 9 th , 2009
Feb. 16 th 2010	Congress legislators from the Telengana region resign from the JAC due to 'unilateral actions by KCR'	

Feb. 21 st 2010	Sri Krishna Committee solicits suggestions/ views from the political parties, social organisations and other stakeholders	
Feb. 22 nd 2010	More than 25 Telengan people commit suicide over the delay in the formation of Telengana state	
April 10 th 2010	Over 60.000 petitions are received by Committee	Committee begins to personal interactions with the various stakeholders
Dec. 30 th 2010	The Srikrishna committee on Telengana submits its report in two volumes to the Home Ministry of India ¹⁷	
Jan. 6 th 2011	Publication of Srikishan Committee report by Home ministry ¹⁸	

Table 2: Chronology of the Telengana movement

Telengana re-dux: The rise, decline, and return of the Telengana movement

Because Andhra Pradesh was the first example of a successful cultural nationalist movement in India driven by the collective urge of Telugu-speaking people to see their identity enshrined in a territorial State where it would acquire the status of a hegemonic, official language, there is a sense of déjà vu about the Telengana movement. The principle of language as the basis of a territorial unit — as

17 Telangana report on PC table, talks on Jan 6, Retrieved 2011-03-12. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Telangana-report-on-PC-table-talks-on-Jan-6/Article1-644744.aspx>

18 Full text: Srikrishna report on Telangana - Resources News - IBNLive⁴. Ibnlive.in.com. 2010-02-03. Retrieved 2011-03-12. <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/full-text-srikrishna-report-on-telangana/139632-53.html>

opposed to something *rational* and *useful* like natural resources — was reluctantly conceded by the modernist Nehru who saw language and all aspects of identity as a reactionary move once they became the basis of political demands. However, the *fait accompli* of the creation of a linguistic State established the legitimacy of such demands and the idea was thereafter institutionalised in a three-language formula¹⁹ and in the reorganisation of India's internal boundaries. The highlights of the Srikrishna committee (appointed by the Government of India) report (see below), which outlines six different solutions for the resolution of the Telengana issue, appears to have continued in the same transcultural vein as the original State Reorganisation Commission.²⁰

1. Maintain status quo
2. Bifurcation of the State into Seemandhra and Telengana with Hyderabad as a Union Territory and the two states developing their own capitals in due course
3. Bifurcation of State into Rayala–Telengana and coastal Andhra regions with Hyderabad as an integral part of Rayala–Telengana
4. Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh into Seemandhra and Telengana with enlarged Hyderabad Metropolis as a separate Union Territory
5. Bifurcation of the State into Telengana and Seemandhra as per existing boundaries, with Hyderabad as the capital of Telengana and Seemandhra to have a new capital
6. Keeping the State united by simultaneously providing certain definite Constitutional/Statutory measures for the socio-economic development and political empowerment of Telengana region; creation of a statutorily empowered Telengana Regional Council.²¹

19 Faced with language movements agitating for the creation of States based on the mother tongue spoken by the majority of the people of the area, the States Reorganisation Commission of 1957 came up with the “three-language formula”. This formula suggested that the main regional language should be the official language of the area, but also that English and Hindi should be retained as national link languages and that a third language (if Hindi is the main language of the area) should be encouraged. The recommendations of this commission, which ultimately led to the creation of largely homogenous linguistic States, nevertheless recognised the variable and negotiable links between language, area, and people, testifying to the transcultural character of the language regime.

20 For a commented summary of the report, please follow the link below:<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/summary-of-the-srikrishna-committee-report-77492?cp>

21 Source: <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/summary-of-the-srikrishna-committee-report-77492?cp>

The main focus of the culture nationalist leaders of the Telengana movement is to show that their identity is linked to a variation of the Telugu language. In the heat of the rhetoric typical of cultural nationalist movements, facts that were buried during the Telugu euphoria of the earlier phases have been revealed. Thus, we learn that the Telugu spoken in Telengana is different from the Telugu of coastal Andhra; that the people of Telengana have long chafed under coastal domination; and that the 150 years of rule by the Nizam of Hyderabad has led to institutions that are different from those prevailing in coastal Andhra. However, from a comparative angle these arguments are not sufficiently convincing, since one finds comparable differences between the hill and coastal regions of Orissa that have not incited a comparable demand for a new territorial unit. Nor does the mere fact of difference between Telengana and the coastal regions of Andhra explain the on-again, off-again character of the movement for a separate State.

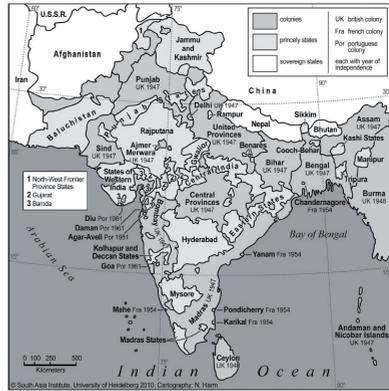
The non-banalisation of Andhra/Telugu political space: what previous theory has ignored

The continued existence of a subaltern Telugu identity in the shadow of the established high Telugu culture (based mostly on the fertile coastal region of the State of Andhra) is important empirical evidence for the relevance of the transcultural approach (refer to footnote 2 above). A brief examination of the events in Telengana reveal the excitement, reminiscent of similar movements in other parts of India, of students, teachers, traders, ordinary folk and professional politicians about the need for and imperative of a territorial state that would be home to the imagined community. The movement is ongoing and we have not yet seen the final plays of this round. One thing is abundantly clear, however: the identity that has been swept under the carpet of omnibus Telugu identity, in the way the Tamil or Oriya identities are banalised and ensconced within the territorial bounds of Tamil Nadu and Orissa, is far from recognised. The analysis below draws on the concepts of memory and relative time as variables that are supplementary to those invoked in the 'rational politics of cultural nationalism model,' which has helped to explain the resurgence of the Telengana movement.

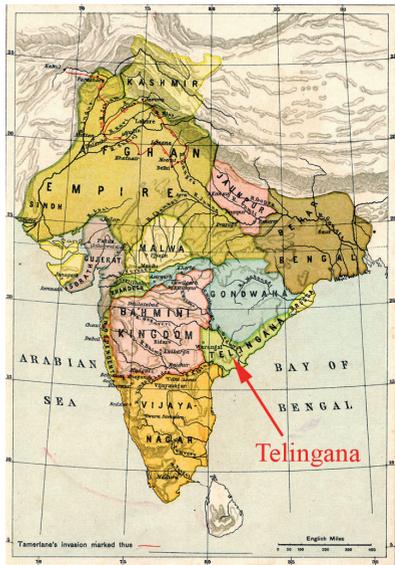
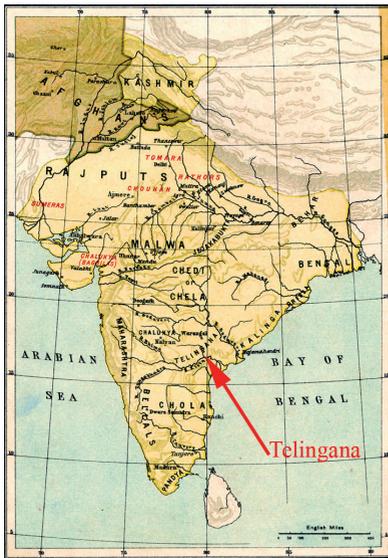
The persistence of memory: reminiscence of a pre-modern Telengana political entity

Telengana *re-dux* is a signal to the political analyst that quite a few of the assumptions about time, memory, and endogeneity that went into conceptualising the model of the rational politics of cultural nationalism are ripe for revision. In the first place, if we stretch the temporal domain of the problem to the era before Independence then we can see that the existence of a 'Telengana identity' is bolstered by firm cartographic evidence, whereas no such marker can be found for the Andhra State (see Map 4 and 5). In other

words, the all-encompassing Andhra–Telugu identity is of comparatively recent vintage compared to Telengana. In terms of history and institutions, this deep memory has been shaped differently, both historically and institutionally, from the coastal Andhra identity during the century and a half of separate political order. This has registered itself among the advocates of the Telengana State who gleefully point to the separate identity of ‘their’ Telugu as compared to that of the coastal people (see Map 2 and 3).



Maps 2 and 3: British India prior to 1947 and British India in 1947



Maps 4 and 5: India in 1022 CE and India in 1398 CE

As we look outside the fixed space that the modern state—firmly ensconced in the world of here and now—occupies in our political landscape, we must take into account the everyday life of ordinary folks. We must also notice the role that the past continues to play in the present, and how memory persists within the interstices of a firm and dense modernity that often does all it can to deny its existence. A famous painting by Dali gives visual shape to this idea of non-linear time, where the past, rather than being buried under the weight of the present, might metamorphose into the future. Despite its appearance of spontaneity, the emergence of an endogenous modernity that strategically re-uses the past by incorporating selected elements with the categories exogenous to the local context is neither automatic nor inevitable. Its appearance and form are contingent upon the manipulation of events by the particular leadership and the availability of the specific memories of separate existence as a political unit (strong in Kashmir, Punjab, and Telengana but weak in Western Orissa).

Time as Non-linear and heterogeneous

The concept of objective, homogeneous time-space coordinates played a crucial role in the conventional model. However, the counter-factual of Telengana—which questions the prediction of the ‘rational politics of cultural nationalism model’—alerts us that there may be further multiplicity in the voices, strategies, and trajectories of any given time or space than the conventional model assumes. Anderson makes the same point in his assertion about the social and political construction of time and shows how, in a given time-space context, different actors who are connected and yet widely different in terms of their interests, identities, and sense of time might co-exist; despite being totally unaware of one another they nonetheless form part of an apparently homogenous “imagined community.” A close reading of Anderson reveals his use of the non-linearity of time to explain the messiness that marks the rise of cultural nationalist movements. The example he gives of a love quadrangle is revealing (see Figure 2).

<p>A simple novel plot: A man (A) has a wife (B) and a mistress (C), who in turn has a lover (D)</p>			
<i>Time:</i>	I	II	III
<i>Events:</i>	A quarrels with B C and D make love	A telephones C B shops D plays pool	D gets drunk in a bar A dines at home with B C has an ominous dream

Fig. 2: Benedict Anderson’s heterogeneous, multiple, and non-linear time within the ‘imagined community’

Anderson demonstrates through this example how the linear, homogeneous, objective time of the observer differs from the subjective times of the actors.

Notice that during this sequence A and D never meet, indeed may not even be aware of each other's existence if C has played her cards right. What then actually links A to D? Two complementary conceptions: First, that they are embedded in 'societies' (Wessex, Luebeck, Los Angeles). These societies are sociological entities of such firm and stable reality that their members (A and D) can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted and still be connected. Second, that A and D are embedded in the minds of the omniscient readers. Only they, like God watch A telephoning C, B shopping and D playing pool all at once. That all these acts are performed at the same clocked, calendrical time but by actors, who may be largely unaware of one another, shows the novelty of this imagined world conjured up by the author in his readers' minds.²²

Anderson alerts us to the possibility that in a given time and place, there may exist people with a different sense of time and space, for time is not homogeneous, linear and irreversible but individual and imaginary and as such, susceptible to strategic use as any other resource. In Anderson's story, the man is back with his wife in the third tranche of time, whereas the mistress is skipping over the present to conflate the past and the future in an 'ominous' dream. In its fullness, time is heterogeneous, multiple, and non-linear; and it is conceptualised differently by the actors who operate in their own concepts of time and space. Given the choice and institutional room to manoeuvre, the heterogeneity of the actors might surface in the shape of different agencies. In other words, even as the model talked about time in terms of points in time t_1 ----- t_5 at a macro level, in the micro worlds of the actors some might not follow the same sequence.²³

22 Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 25–27.

23 "There is the basic problem of distinguishing the emic and etic perspectives on time. Etic i.e. is the perspective of the outsider e.g. the scientist on time (e.g. 1000 BCE). Emic is the perspective of the person(s) that the outsider, scientist etc. is looking at. We try to understand the political movements in India from our point of view, i.e. measuring in years, weeks etc. However, the major incentive for people to act is not the time measured (i.e. the etically definable time), but the time felt (e.g. it is too long ago since... thus we have to act). This emic perception of time is neither predictable nor measurable. But taking this perception of time into consideration should prevent us from arguing only with measurable time units." Philipp Stockhammer, personal communication.

In addition to the implications of agency variables like the conception of time and space, structural variables like parties, interest groups, civil society, and networks that link the local arena with the wider world are also important factors, acting as catalysts or conveyors for the flow of ideas. Whereas the earlier model conceptualised the sub-nationalist in time t_1 in a very much us-against-them mode, in a situation (for instance, that which, at the time of writing, prevails in Telengana/Andhra Pradesh) where the adversary is itself divided into coalition partners with separate agendas, where political parties are happy to move in proactively hoping to make political capital out of the conflict, and where the media, judiciary, and the globalised world are conscious of issues relating to minorities and their desperate search to assert and sustain their unique identity, the national state is comparatively enfeebled and sub-nationalists are relatively empowered. This certainly has implications for the dynamism of a given movement. The endogenous development is very much influenced by exogenous forces.²⁴

The conventional model had cast an imagined community, which formed the domain of a given sub-national movement, as a fixed space that remains static as the movement progresses from t_1 to t_5 . In retrospect, this does not appear to have been the case in Andhra or in any other movements, for Telengana is not the only movement of its kind in India. There are others (Kashmir being an extreme but not the only example; Gorkhaland runs a close parallel) that question the exclusive claims of a national, homogenising state. Also, the people staking a claim to an imaginary homeland are themselves not homogeneous and do not stay together until the movement reaches its goal. The section below discusses how responsive and accountable elites cope with—and instigate—the challenge of sub-nationalism.

The challenge of nation-building in post-colonial, multi-ethnic societies: the dynamism of identities and the maleability of political space

We discuss in this section the significance of the transcultural approach to the problem of legitimacy and resilience of the modern state in post-colonial, multi-ethnic societies. The growing salience of ethnic identity, particularly in the context of diverse societies, has emerged as a challenge in contemporary post-colonial nations. Ethnicity challenges the classic bonding factors of territory and class. The ethnic challenge has rendered the evolution and sustainability of mono-cultural nations, ensconced within specific national territories, on the

24 Witness the pitched battles that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia, the ongoing struggles in Kashmir and Bodoland, and the ‘velvet revolutions’ that led to the creation of the Czech and the Slovak republics or, for that matter, the creation of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarchanchal.

pattern of nineteenth-century nationalism, with its ‘rule of one’—one territory, one language, one religion, and one nation faced with an adversary – into a contested issue. The electoral articulation of ethnic assertion and—sporadic but extremely violent—inter-community conflict over the past years have added an extra poignant twist to this question in India’s case, particularly in view of the country’s long tradition of accommodation of diversity within a common space. For many, this raises a general question about the nature of community and legitimacy in the world’s “largest democracy.”

The relevance and urgency of this issue for contemporary India can hardly be over-stated. Since the 1980s Indian politics has moved beyond the point where usefully fuzzy concepts like “unity in diversity” as the cultural basis of a tolerant pluralism in India, or the Congress System based on consensus and accommodation could be seen as sufficient guarantees of India’s national unity and integrity as a state.²⁵ The questions at the heart of the issue today are: What kind of nation underpins the state in India? Which resources do the post-colonial state and society possess in order to sustain multicultural nationhood? And most important for this article, why does Telengana remain the exception rather than the rule that makes India’s innovative use of federalism as part of the strategy of state formation an effective solution to sub-nationalism?

Because the bark of the sub-nationalist can be much louder than his bite, the mere existence of a subaltern identity—despite its importance for the transcultural approach—is necessary but not sufficient to spur actual political action. A lot depends on the room to manoeuvre available to the established leadership who might naturally be resistant to the kind of change that entails a diminution of their power. On the other hand, they might spot an opportunity to enhance their legitimacy through a revision of territorial boundaries. Indeed, they might calculate that an appropriate negotiation with these political actors can actually enhance the legitimacy of the state.²⁶ In India’s political space it is possible today for communities to form and dissolve in order to re-emerge as parts of other communities. Seen from a distance and over time, political transaction has taken manifold forms, ranging from voting and lobbying to protest movements and, ultimately, violent conflict. These have in turn produced an understanding of what leads to violence, instilling in the process a greater accommodation of cultural and religious differences; castes,

25 Of the two mainstays of the fuzzy Indian nationalist notion of ‘unity in diversity,’ the main ideological device, lies amongst the rubble of the Babri mosque. The second, the Congress System, which served as its institutional base, now firmly belongs to India’s recent past after successive electoral defeats.

26 These calculations led to the creation of three new States—Uttarakhand, Chhatisgarh, and Jharkhand—during the rule of the NDA. Remarkably, these States were not formed on the basis of language, but ethnic and economic considerations played a role.

religious communities, and ethnic groups are all impregnated by the spirit of transaction and coalition building and the result is a significant empowerment of minorities.²⁷ In India's multicultural society, the members of different communities, castes, and language groups have risen to the highest levels in public office as well as in sports, films, and academia.²⁸

Thanks to the salience of coalition politics rather than party competition, the structure and process of Indian politics in the 1990s should have a familiar ring for those conversant with the politics of continental Europe. As a consequence of and compared to previous situations the moderation of shrill ideological overtones in the search for a winning formula based on governance has become the new mantra of Indian politics. Having come into their own, the regional parties are increasingly self-confident when working out deals with one another as well as with national parties. The Congress is still suspect, but that may change once the afterglow of Congress hegemony has completely burnt out, leaving the Congress to behave much as any other political party. One sure sign of this is that the terms of political discourse are no longer mediated by the salient values that once defined the core of India's high politics. The regionalists—which as a group draws people from India's periphery in terms of religion, elite caste-status, or geographic distance from the centre—are able to generate a different construction of the nation state that is in sync with the times as well as market-friendly and with a humane face. When speaking in the national mode, the regionalists do not count out the need to be well-informed and decisive in defence of the security and integrity of the nation but in terms of the actual policies of the state, they are much more willing and—in view of its social base—able to listen to the minorities, to regions with historical grievances, and to sections of society that entered post-independence politics with unsolved pre-independence (in some cases, pre-modern) grievances. It is thanks to these regionalists that the emerging multi-party democracy of India is not merely an anomic battle for power and

27 When asked, "Suppose there were no parties or assemblies and elections were not held—do you think that the government in this country can be run better?" 69 p contemporary per cent of Indians argued the contrary. But at 72 per cent, the number of Muslims making the same argument in favour of retaining the democratic structure is even higher than the average (See Subrata K Mitra and V.B. Singh. *When Rebels become Stakeholders: Democracy, Agency and Social Change in India* (Delhi: Sage, 2009), 107.

28 The percentage of India's largest minority, the Muslims, has actually grown since Independence. This is more than India's South Asian neighbours can claim. Ayodhya was, of course, the most tragic instance failure in the communal accommodation process, which is all the more reason to take into account what has happened since. The nature of national reaction against the destruction of the Babri Mosque by Hindu fanatics in 1992 has significantly altered the strategic thinking of the main protagonists and has helped moderate opinion (on both sides) prevail enough to revive the process of communal accommodation through transaction and judicialisation.

short-term gain but the releasing of pent-up creativity and visions that provide a fertile and cohesive backdrop to the realignment of social forces. Far from being its antithesis, region has actually emerged as the nursery of the nation.

The constitution of India conceptualised citizenship as necessarily multicultural and complex—comprising both political edge and moral stretch. The political cutting edge entitles the citizen—as opposed to the alien and the subject—to certain rights that are to be shared in common with others. The moral depth binds citizens in empathy and solidarity with those who differ culturally and ties them together through the bond of common citizenship (see Figure 3).

Although language and tribe are not explicitly accorded any legitimacy by the Indian state in defining national identity, they are accepted as the basis for politico-administrative units. This results in two basic contradictions: First, it militates against the notion of single citizenship, since domiciliary requirements are often prescribed by these units for availing some of the civil and social citizenship entitlements. Second, such prescriptions often render as outsiders those who do not share the relevant linguistic and tribal identities. Thus, a second category of ethnic groups emerge—those who are nationals in their respective homeland (e.g. Maharashtrians in Maharashtra and Nagas in Nagaland) but ethnic groups elsewhere in the territory of the Indian state. Full citizenship entitlements granted to all members of the polity irrespective of their spatial locations can partly moderate the tensions and conflicts between nationals and ethnic groups.

The Modern 'Post-colonial' State, Traditional Society and Citizenship:
Overlapping Legal and Moral Categories

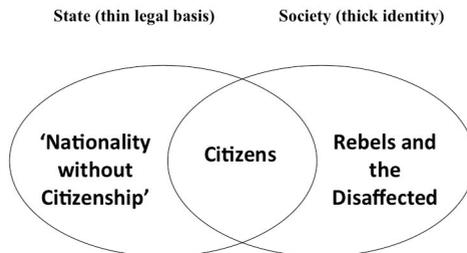


Fig. 3: Overlapping circles of state and society

The Indian Constitution has taken this on board through the concept of “differentiated citizenship.” And a toolkit has evolved over the past decades (see Figure 4) that underpins the efforts of India’s elite decision-makers to combine law and order management, strategic reform, and accommodation of

values in order to generate a level playing field that can sustain multicultural citizenship.

The core idea behind the toolkit of citizenship is to identify concrete levels of action that can transform rebels or the alienated into citizens. With this intention, the design of the toolkit seeks to explore the room to manoeuvre within the structure of the state. The Indian record of successfully turning subjects into citizens has cross-national significance because, rather than being a unique attribute of Indian culture, it is based on an institutional arrangement containing several important parameters. The first of these are the legal sources of citizenship as formulated in the Indian Constitution (articles 5–11), the Constituent Assembly Debates (which provide insights into the controversy surrounding specific articles), and the legislation undertaken by the national parliament to enable and amend, depending on the case, the original provisions of the constitution. “Judicialisation” of citizenship is yet another method of synchronising the provisions of the law and the new demands emerging from society. In addition to birth and residence, the assertion of identity and linkage to India has emerged as a supplementary basis of Indian citizenship. Property and citizenship have been constantly interwoven and the question of who can own property and how much, have had fluid answers. In the case of Kashmir, the laws have always had a slightly different tinge due to the special agreement declaring that the Indian Acts are not normally applicable in Kashmir. In the last decade, case law has tended towards a more flexible and all-encompassing understanding of Indian stipulations in relation to property, and, of course, the onset of economic liberalisation has given wings to an even further judicial liberalisation of these concepts. Similarly, recent laws allowing NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) to own property have already been registered in case law.

A brief perusal of Indian politics shows how India uses a mix of federalism and consociationalism to produce what the state hopes the actors will see as a level playing field despite some manifest institutional or political inequalities. The standard procedure has been to carve out federal States for linguistically homogeneous groups so that, for the bulk of their transactions, people living in them will not feel discriminated against because of the dominance of other larger linguistic groups. At the same time, a host of measures, like the independent Finance Commission, devise means of differential allocation to balance the needs of equity, growth, and entrepreneurial incentives. The problem arises when it comes to smaller groups that are cohesive and different from the larger groups but are nonetheless nested in the territory allocated to the larger group. Here,

innovative, hybrid categories like ‘sub-states’ offer a means of top-slicing the resources allocated to the larger units to feed the special needs of the smaller nested minorities.²⁹

Culture, Context and Strategy in Turning Subjects into Citizens: A
Dynamic Neo-Institutional Model

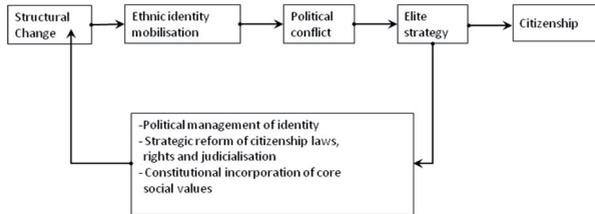


Fig 4: Culture, context and strategy in turning subjects into citizens: a dynamic neo-institutional model

India’s relative success with regard to solving identity-based conflict can be attributed to the fact that constitutional and political tools are used with unusual vigour and imagination by the political decision-makers in an environment that is democratic, relatively transparent, and generally accountable. The typical strategy forms a three-prong attack on conflict that issues out of the hiatus between the general legal norms of the state and the assertion of political identity contesting the state. India makes stakeholders out of rebels by adroitly combining reform, repression, and a selective recruitment of rebels into the privileged circle of new elites. (see Figure 4 again)

This model weaves together several insights that we have gained from the Indian attempt to turn subjects into citizens in a form that can be used as the basis of comparison across countries. Foremost among these is the fact that in the Indian discourse and public policy citizenship is conceptualised both as a ‘product’ and a ‘process,’ which is tantamount to saying that citizen-making is the primary objective of the constitution, modern institutions, and the public policy of the state. On the other hand, the three processes are reinforced by the momentum generated from below as people assert their

²⁹ See Arendt Lijphart, “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy,” *American Political Science Review*, 90 no. 2 (1996): 258–268 for a detailed discussion of India’s efforts at combining federalism and consociationalism as a means of sustaining its democracy.

citizen-rights and articulate them through a complex repertoire that effectively combines political participation with strategic protest. Both the state and the *janata*—India’s generic category for politically conscious and articulate participants in everyday politics—draw on categories that are indigenous as well as imported.³⁰ The process stretches out into the memory of self-hood and rights, and of empowerment through a chain of associations that links people in one part of the country to another. One consequence is the emergence of the hybrid multicultural citizen—a liminal category that joins the protester and the participant together, stretching the accommodating capacity of the political system and blunting the sharp edges of anti-system behaviour.

The model of multicultural ‘citizen making’ and space-re-designing (see Figure 4) highlights the role of elites and of strategies of reform. It also explains India’s attempts at generating differentiated and multi-level citizenship (new conceptual tools with relevance for policy-making) as categories germane to its politics. That makes citizenship in India a significant case study of “conceptual flow” where practices, notions, and institutions of citizenship have been transferred, imported, emulated, and adapted to successfully, but sometimes meet local needs and constraints unsuccessfully.³¹

Towards a synthesis: The model of ‘rational’ politics of cultural nationalism re-formulated

In light of its implications for the ‘rational politics of cultural nationalism,’ ‘Telengana re-dux’ is located mid-way between a Kuhnian puzzle and an anomaly.³² The analytical issues that it has raised have helped us to reconsider the main premises of the model, expand its domain by including new variables, and reconsider previous evidence, leading to a reformulation of the conventional model.

The process of reformulating a coherent rational politics for the cultural nationalism model should begin with the recognition that the real world does

30 The etymology and genealogy of hybrid terms like *satyagraha*—the iconic blending of the imported notion of the right to participation and the indigenous concept of truth—developed by Gandhi to great effect, or *rail roko* are examples of this form of hybridising political categories.

31 A good case in point for the complex and contradictory nature of cultural and conceptual flow is the volte face of women’s rights in Kashmir under the contradictory pulls of the struggle for independence (*azadi*) on the one hand and the use of Islam of the Wahabi variant to press these rights (which as a corollary relegate women to the background) on the other.

32 A puzzle is a problem, solvable within the framework of the existing framework of knowledge that Kuhn (1962) calls a scientific paradigm. Anomalies are issues where the solution would require a new paradigm.

not always conform to the ideal type life cycle of a sub-national movement as discussed above. As one can see in Figure 5, the course of the movement might lead to fragmentation of the imagined community, which

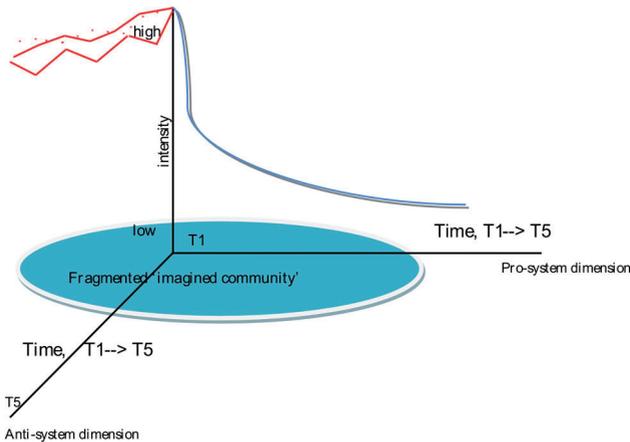


Fig. 5: A fragmented imagined community. Anti-system dimension. The figure represents a situation where the imagined community has been fragmented between groups in terms of their attitudes towards negotiation with the central authorities. The pro-system group finds a place for itself within the central state and its ideological fervour is banalised, whereas the splinter groups continue to agitate with various degrees of intensity.

leads in turn to the creation of a plethora of splinter movements, some prepared to negotiate ('sell out') and others obstinately holding on to the myth of the founding fathers. In Nagaland, as in Kashmir, one finds a situation where a part of the imagined community has followed the ideal type life cycle and its leaders now hold power as elected Chief Ministers. However, some other sections have continued the agitation with varying degrees of violence. The result is a fractured imagined community that still defines Naga or Kashmiri despite the radically different courses taken by their political destinies. The other scenario is seen in Tamil Nadu where practically the entire imagined community has become part of democratic governance and Indian citizenship. Of course, the fate of their Tamil brethren in Sri Lanka still remains topical and the line that India should pursue in this regard has become a point of division among different Tamil parties. But these differences do not spill over into violence as in Kashmir or in Nagaland. The post-Operation Blue Star politics of Punjab is a good example of the co-existence of a negotiated settlement ushering in normal politics led by the Akali Dal, while some extremist elements of the SGPC continues to exist underground, (see the reference to

‘dormant’ in Table 1) and to commit sporadic acts of terrorism.³³ In light of the Telengana movement, Andhra Pradesh can be seen to exist between these two polar opposite types.

In my view, a proper understanding of sub-nationalist movements not only requires both the instrumental and primordial approaches for a fuller analysis, but also the effects of memory, flow, and heterogeneous, multiple, and non-linear time. The movement for Khalistan, the desired homeland of Sikh separatists, for example, would not exist but for the sentiments of sacrifice, honour, dignity, and pride inspired by the memories of the Sikh *gurus*—spiritual leaders of the community who in past centuries provided a focus of resistance against Muslim rulers. At the same time, it also required the political skills of Bhindranwale (the leader of Akali Dal’s most intransigent faction who was killed in the army action against the Golden Temple of Amritsar in 1984) to draw all the strands together into a powerful movement for Khalistan.³⁴ However, it is important to remember that stability and banalisation require the perception on both sides that there is nothing more to be lost or gained; the sub-nationalist leadership might split over this issue, leading to new imagined communities and a new spiral of violence. This partially explains what keeps the Kashmir imbroglio contained but also unresolvable within the structure of India’s liberal democratic central state, which is committed both to liberty and to the sacredness of the frontiers inherited from the British colonial rulers.

The basic premises of the conventional model hold also in the case of the reformulated model, which retains the six explanatory variables of the conventional model—namely, the value dissonance between the state and the sub-national group, difference in material affluence, exclusion of sub-national elites from high office, the perception of weakening central rule, helpful geo-political conditions such as sanctuary, and the availability of a social network capable of transformation into political alliances. Thanks to the counter-factual of the Telengana movement we can now add fresh insights to this, including the memory of a separate political being, personal time trajectories, and the emergence of new imagined communities. Yet another variable that we have not explored fully is the reasons behind the failure of the federal-consociational measure, which was originally meant to bolster

33 Even politics in Tamil Nadu, the most successful case of the ideal type explanation, show a splintering of the original movement and several Tamil parties with different takes on the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka.

34 Robin Jeffrey, *What’s Happening to India?: Punjab, Ethnic Conflict and the Test for Federalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1986), 9.

the territorial unit carved out for the initial sub-national movement with guarantees for nested minorities. The failure of this measure was perhaps the result of the lack of a policing mechanism or, where one existed, its decay over time.

The political process through which sub-nationalist movements are able to draw on the instrumental and primordial aspects of cultural nationalism in order to assemble a strategic repertoire is of crucial significance. In this context, the notion of an “imagined political community—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”³⁵ is of central importance as it provides an empirical link between the instrumental and primordial approaches. A sub-nationalist movement is a political creation based on a cultural foundation that is ‘imagined’ “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”³⁶ The appeal to cultural nationalism made by political actors challenging the authority of a territorial state seeks to transform the link between the imagined community and its social anchors from an implicit to an explicit one. It also claims to use that process in order to generate the necessary political power to give concrete, territorial expression to demands for a homeland. As the examples given in Table 1 suggest, the crucial variables that underpin these movements vary from one context to another. Subsequent analysis will show that this variation also affects their political fortunes.

The rational politics of coping with sub-nationalism can draw on the political culture and tradition of multiple identities, which are stacked hierarchically by the actor in the light of his own value system. Looking back, one can find a long genealogy of precedents for this particular mode of articulating multiple identities, with all the implications they have for re-designing space that was once considered rigid and immutable. Two citations, one from an Oriya Member of the parliament in the first Lok Sabha over five decades back and another from Parkash Singh Badal, an Akali politician from Punjab, reveal the early penchant for an inclusive, multicultural nationalism of India:

“My first ambition,” the Oriya M.P. said, “is the glory of Mother India. I know it in my heart of hearts that I am an Indian first and an Indian last. But when you say you are a Bihari, I say I am an Oriya. When you say you are a Bengali, I say I am an Oriya. Otherwise, I am an Indian.”³⁷

35 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso 1983), 15.

36 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15.

37 Lokenath Misra, M.P., *Debates on the Report of the States Reorganization Commission*, Lok Sabha

The same sentiments were expressed by Parkash Singh Badalon the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Akali faction led by him:

Shiromani Akali Dal is a symbol of the aspirations and hopes of Punjab. The Dal has always struggled for human rights, Punjab, Punjabi and the rights of Sikhs. For this the Akali Dal has made innumerable sacrifices....we are committed to peace and shall not allow it to be disturbed at any cost. We have full faith in the constitutional method. We shall curb corruption and shall strive to give a clean government... when today we are celebrating our 75th anniversary we reaffirm our commitment to our goals.... now regional parties and national parties who believe in internal autonomy for States are coming together. Akali Dal is very keen to co-operate with them.³⁸

Form and content: context, flow, and agency in the shaping of sub-national movements

While sub-national movements as a genre share some common features, the specific form they take (contrast the largely peaceful *rail roko* type of protest movement discussed above with the violent frenzy of Kashmiri mobs engaging the forces of law and order in violent battles) varies from one context to another. Here, the political scientist gleans insight from the sculpture of Brancusi “who saw the artist as an intercessor who reveals the ‘cosmic essence of the material’ lying at the very heart of the medium he uses” for inspiration.³⁹ Brancusi “considered the material to have a life of its own, a uniqueness that he had to seek out and understand in order to achieve unity with the form, believing that the sculpture was already contained in the material chosen and his task was to reveal it.” Just as a solid block of stone contains the unique form that the artist alone sees⁴⁰ and seeks to make public to the world, so too do the initiators of a sub-nationalist movement perceive in the raw material—a shared grievance, a specific memory, and a regional space to act as the basis

Secretariat, New Delhi, (December 1955) vol. 1, col. 647, cited in Selig Harrison, India: The Most Dangerous Decades (Princeton University Press, 1960), 11.

38 B.K. Chum, “Akali Dal goes for mainstream politics,” Deccan Herald, February 27, 1996. See also Subrata Mitra, “Nation and Region in Indian Politics: Results of a Post-poll Survey, 1996,” *AsienAfrikaLateinamerika*, 25 (1997): 514–515 for a further discussion of this point.

39 The citations are from ‘Atelier Brancusi’, Centre Pompidou (Paris), www.centrepompidou.fr

40 “This is believed to have been first and most famously articulated by Michelangelo; he always stated that the sculpture is inside the stone and he only has to free it from the surrounding material; thus, several of the famous sculptures of Michelangelo were intentionally unfinished showing the idea of the stone already containing the sculpture.” Personal communication, Philipp Stockhammer, October 25, 2011.

of a homeland—the opportunity to launch a movement. The form that the movement might take is not pre-ordained or pre-designed but evolves out of the specific context. The form emerges out of the matter, for the stone-throwing mobs of the Kashmiri *intifada* and the train-stopping squatters of Telengana are communicating the same political message.

The second theme that the student of comparative politics might garner from the oeuvre of Brancusi is the notion of metamorphosis, which is brilliantly put to effect in his transformation of Leda from the hunted to the hunter. Besides being imaginative and innovative in designing the form of their movement, sub-nationalists can also be strategically skilful in inverting the relations of power in the David and Goliath battle between unequal adversaries. The hunted, as much in Kashmir as in Telengana, can become the hunter. As the Greek myth has it, “Zeus changed into a swan in order to seduce Leda but it seems that for Brancusi it is Leda who is transformed. In Leda he saw a form ‘ceaselessly creating a new life, a new rhythm’, aiming to show that ‘life is fermentation and must be transformed in order to remain alive.’”⁴¹ The original Greek myth—in a straightforward narrative—is given visual shape by Rubens, where one clearly sees Zeus in disguise taking possession of the object of his desire in much the same way that the proponents of Telengana might fret about the intentions of the central Indian state and their allies in coastal Andhra.

But the lesson of Brancusi’s Leda metamorphosis is that politics is a game that two can play, and that the last move is not the unique prerogative of either party.

In a global world of constant, ceaseless, and multifaceted flow, politics has become increasingly full of possibilities. However, that apparent chaos need not transform comparative politics into solipsistic, inchoate introspection. The analysis undertaken in this paper is meant to expand the toolkit of comparative politics to include some new variables—in this case, memory, flow, and multiple and non-linear time—in its efforts to make sense of apparent disorder.

Conclusion: flow, endogenous modernity, and the malleability of political space

Transcultural studies or, for that matter, the concept of cultural flow do not necessarily reject the concept of rational choice. Political actors now, as indeed political persons at all times, think strategically and make choices that, depending on the context, involve voting, lobbying, paying a bribe, throwing

41 ‘Atelier Brancusi’, Centre Pompidou (Paris), www.centrepompidou.fr

stones, or more extreme methods like trading one's life against that of the adversary. The fact remains that all models of human behaviour today, including those drawing on rational choice, need to build some extra assumptions into the empirical specification of abstract models. To begin with one must think beyond the national state, taking into serious consideration the politics above and below the state and beyond the world of the here and now, since memory and non-linear time is where the distant past skips over the immediate past in order to become a part of the argument about the present. Just as important is the asymmetrical nature of power; as we learn from Brancusi, the hunter can become the hunted!

Based on the case of Telengana, this article has attempted to illustrate some of these points through trans-disciplinary excursions into the lessons of Anderson, Dali, and Brancusi for additional insights into the causes of the resurgent movement for a separate State. This essay is thus a reappraisal of the models of sub-national movements based on rational choice theory in light of counter-factuals like the reappearance of a movement that conventional theory did not predict. The general intention that underpins the detailed case study of the Telengana movement is to develop a new explanation of sub-national movements belonging to the general category of ethno-national movements. This new explanation adds concepts based on the transcultural approach, including the re-use of collective memory, the *non-linearity of time*, the dynamism of *imagined communities*, and *cultural and conceptual 'flow'* to the conventional arguments of politics driven by power and interests.⁴² Instead of predicting a once-and-for-all state-formation and fixed national and regional boundaries based on what this article calls the "illusion of permanence," the revised model presented here is more circumspect about the future, which it conceptualises in terms of probabilities that are contingent on a larger cluster of factors instead of the conventional model of rational politics in cultural nationalism.

Sub-nationalism has long been considered an anomaly for both liberal and Marxist social theorists, who concede its existence but cannot explain it adequately. The analysis undertaken here moves beyond the sociological and historical accounts of the origins and evolution of sub-nationalism by formulating a new explanation that draws on theories of rational choice and

42 Telengana is no exception and it has strong parallels with other incompletely resolved ethno-national movements like Kashmir. The Kashmir issue, like Telengana, also "seemed to have been 'settled' by India's de facto acceptance of the LOC [Line of Control] and creation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir accompanied by exceptions in the Indian constitution.... Today the Kashmir issue is far more nuanced than in 1948-9 with several identifiable nationalist strategies associated with different imagined versions of the Kashmiriyat." Comment, Referee B.

collective action as well as on elements from the transcultural approach. In making this argument this article seeks to go beyond conventional models of comparative politics, which assert that (a) leaders of sub-nationalist movements draw on *both* sentiments and interest, and (b) the direction and pace of these movements are influenced by the political resources that they are able to mobilise. These separatist movements are seen by governments as fissiparous tendencies and threats to law and order. However, the 'sub-nationalists' themselves contest the authority of the successor 'nation' states and consider their claims justified by their unique identities, which are derived from their affinity with a particular language, religion, ethnicity, or region. Watching closely the unfolding of the current spate of agitation for Telengana, this article argues that one can see the depth of intensity some of the activists feel, particularly from their desecration of the statues of heroes from the previous movement for a Telugu-speaking Andhra state (see footnote 7 above). To achieve a fuller understanding of the Telengana movement, and indeed ethno-national movements as a whole, this article proposes looking beyond the 'rational politics of cultural nationalism model' and taking into account some additional variables that give specific sub-national movements their singularity.

While the transcultural approach helps us to understand the factors behind the emergence or re-emergence of certain ethno-national movements, it does not necessarily predict a successful resolution leading to the creation of exclusive homelands. The power of the central state to hold on to existing boundaries is a fact that sub-nationalists ignore at their peril, as the Kurds have discovered to their dismay.⁴³ The reformulated model thus helps explain both the resilience of the federal, liberal, and democratic central state of India and the persistence of *some* sub-national movements like that in Telengana. It also explains why every time a group decides that it has to have its own 'homeland' the state does not necessarily concede its demands. The creation of new spaces is conditional on a state-society 'lock-in' that is legitimated through its anchor in the deep memory of an autonomous existence. The resultant structure might actually be a novelty—the outcome of a synthesis of demands by the contending parties, drawing on the symbiosis of the decision-making elites and their contestants.

43 The political character of the central state is a boundary condition for generalisations to be drawn from the specific analysis of Telengana. Thus, in the context of a different state like China, the cost-benefit calculations of the sub-national actors and their international supporters (e.g. Tibet) will be necessarily different. "The international standing of India as a civilised democratic nation... comes with a double challenge: its capacity to maintain social stability, and its ability to avoid violent social conflict, all the while abiding by standards of civilised societies [is an important factor that influences the calculations of both the state and its adversaries. Inconsequence] both sides, as a rule, look as much for outside support and legitimacy as for support and legitimacy within their own environment." Referee A.

The original model meant to capture the evolution of sub-national movements that had conceptualised the “imagined community” as a fixed and homogenous entity. The revised model treats it as more complex, dynamic, and malleable.

The quest for legitimacy in the age of the global flow of concepts and objects makes it imperative for unreconstructed modernisers to think beyond rigid structures, uniformity (of the one-size-fits-all school), and permanence (of the once-and-for-all type of solutions). The lesson we may draw from the collapse of apparently solid regimes in North Africa in the wake of the Arab Spring is clear—adapt or die! The time has come for the designers of India’s political space to move beyond the orthodoxy of 1947—a great improvement in its time over the rigid practices of Pakistan and Sri Lanka—and to reach out in readiness to embrace policies other than language as the exclusive basis of regional state formation.

The lessons of this article are of cross-national significance. Although we have primarily addressed developments specific to the Indian case, the problem it is concerned with has deep implications for stable democracies in the West as well, especially considering that the recent ban on use of the Islamic headscarf in the public sphere in France and the Swiss plebiscite against building new minarets remain open issues. On the other hand, despite India’s success in developing “a citizenship that can exist with manifold cultural tinges” there are limits to the capacity of the state to accommodate ethno-national demands. Although the combination of federalism and consociationalism has produced a largely successful solution to the problem of integrating different identities within a common structure in India, the issue of a common legal basis as the *sine qua non* of citizenship as opposed to separate personal laws for different communities (e.g. the use of the Sharia for Muslims in matters of marriage, divorce, succession, and adoption) is still a live issue on the political agenda.

One general lesson of this essay is that in India, as indeed in the wider expanse of transitional societies where the modern state is not exclusively endogenous in origin, sub-national movements are a “product of the ‘transcultural’ pasts of the regions which exist in a tense relationship with the homogenising compulsions of the nation states.”⁴⁴ How the central state engages with them depends on the very nature of the state as well as the context and conjuncture. Two important points emerge here: First, the Indian state, combining the legacies of the British solicitude for the rule of law and indirect rule and the firm suppression of secession with an accommodation of the pliable elements of the middle class and the democratic aspirations of the Indian National

44 I am grateful to anonymous referee B for pointing this out.

Movement, is a site of cultural flow⁴⁵; hence, it is more likely to engage in negotiations than, for example, the Chinese state, which has handled the Tibetan demand for autonomy rather differently! Second—context matters. In the case of Telengana, both deep memory and the dynamics of identity are very much in evidence. However, without the deep memories of pre-modern, autonomous political identities (other than in areas such as Western Orissa, which has some objective similarities in terms of relative under-development) one is more likely to see Maoist violence rather than sub-national movements as the chosen vehicle of collective self-assertion.

One of the main paradoxes of our globalised era is the simultaneous dissolution of boundaries, the free flow of information, and the border-crossing of transnational corporations and travellers, on the one hand and the intensity of localised ethnic conflicts, often backed by homogenising fundamentalist movements, on the other. India is no exception to this worldwide trend. Despite its ontological appeal, transcultural theory is not as yet ready to provide a firm predictive response to the question of India's chances of arriving at a peaceful solution in Kashmir or Telengana. This article has argued that transculturality as an approach and a heuristic argument can be a poor predictor of actual behaviour because the strategic aspects of complex decisions and current politics, power, and conflict of interests are not yet sufficiently integrated into what one might call a composite model combining the key arguments of the conventional and the transcultural approaches. The failure to understand the strategic configurations of power can be fatal and can reduce transculturality—postulated as a predictor of behaviour in the real world—to a neo-liberal pipe dream on a global scale.⁴⁶

45 For the cultural flow of colonial rules to the modern, post-colonial state in India, see my essay "From comparative politics to cultural flow: the hybrid state, and resilience of the political system in India," in *Conceptualising Cultural Hybridization: A Trans-disciplinary Approach*, ed. Phillip Stockhammer, Vol. 1. Transcultural Research. Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2011). Similar arguments can be found in David Potter, *India's Political Administrators: From ICS to IAS* (Delhi: Oxford, 1996).

46 Welsch believes "the concept of transculturality to be the most adequate concept of cultures today—for both descriptive and normative reasons" [Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality—the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999) emphasis added]. He concludes his landmark essay with the following: "The concept of transculturality sketches a different picture of the relation between cultures. Not one of isolation and of conflict, but one of entanglement, intermixing, and commonness. It promotes not separation, but exchange and interaction. If the diagnosis given applies to some extent, then tasks of the future—in political and social, scientific and educational, artistic and design-related respects—ought only to be solvable through a decisive turn towards this transculturality." These are brave and optimistic sentiments, but for those familiar with the everyday politics of Kashmir or Chechnya these transcultural sentiments might come across as quaint and idealistic. Over the course of the last five years, the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe" has pushed these concepts further reframed it in a

Ultimately, contemporary political analysis, like other social sciences, needs to make common cause with transcultural studies and to develop the methodological competence to add memory, non-linear time, and the re-use of the toolkit of rational choice-inspired methods in order to make sense of our fast changing world.⁴⁷ By taking on board the variables of memory, relative time, and flow, and re-thinking the conventional tools of power, interest, and values, one can aspire to both *understand* and *explain* by drawing on Max Weber and Emile Durkheim in equal measure.⁴⁸ This toolkit based on multiple methods might be the best way forward in developing a fuller understanding of the resilience of sub-national movements in Kashmir, Chechnya, or Kurdistan than one finds in the strategic thinking of global powers.

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way that allows for analyzing conflicts, political violence, fundamentalism, xenophobia, and discourses of radical alterity through the transcultural lens. Andrea Hacker, personal communication, Dec 10, 2012.

47 The value-added character of the synthesis of methods suggested here can be seen by contrasting Figures 1 and 5; the latter reveals the complex nature of the flow of cultures in terms of an additional dimension showing how high intensity dissident movements can co-exist with a largely banalised former movement ensconced in office, as is the case for Kashmir.

48 See Klaus von Beyme, "Political Theory: Empirical Political Theory," in *A New Handbook of Political Science* eds. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 519–531.

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