

# India as a Unique 'State-Nation'

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## INTRODUCTION\*

Recently, the stability of India's liberal democracy has been praised by many scholars who study democracy. Although there are many defects and limitations in Indian democracy, it is true that it has succeeded in guaranteeing basic political freedoms to a vast population.

Indian democracy consists of various institutional elements derived from India's constitution, which was promulgated in 1950. The most important institutions are periodic elections at various levels, such as Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Union government), Legislative Assemblies (the lower house of the *state* government), Panchayats (Local bodies in rural areas) and urban local bodies. Federalism is another important institution in the Indian democratic regime. Indian federalism has its root in British colonial rule, which gradually integrated and institutionalized various heterogeneous political elements. British rule was formalized through the series of government of India acts promulgated in London. The last enactment of the colonial period, the Government of India Act of 1935, provided self-rule by Indian provincial governments, though this transfer of power was incomplete. The act, however, became the basis of the Indian Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

Indian federalism as an institution is often said to be a 'union' rather than a 'federation' because of the institutionally strong position of the central government vis-à-vis *state* governments. The Constitution of India, for example, provides for the division of legislative and executive functions between the central and *state* governments in the seventh schedule. The Union List (97 items) includes the exclusive functions of the union government, such as defense, diplomacy, atomic energy, railway, currency, etc., while the *State* List (66 items) includes the exclusive functions of *state* governments, such as public order, local governments, agriculture,

\*In this article, 'state' is used in multiple ways and is, therefore, sometimes confusing. In the Indian federation, 'state' means a territorial area with constitutionally defined autonomy, such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, etc. In this case, I use the italic form, namely, '*state*'. When 'state' points to a territorial area whose people have complete autonomy and sovereignty, as in a 'country', the italic form is not used, and it is written 'state'.

etc. The Concurrent List (47 items) includes those items over which both the central and the *state* governments have jurisdiction, such as criminal law, economic and social planning, etc., but the central government has priority over these items when both the central and *state* governments simultaneously insist that they have jurisdiction over the item on the list. The area of jurisdiction of the central government is clearly larger, and the residuary powers, including taxation, are vested in the union government (Khan 1992: 48). In addition, Article 356 enables the president, on the advice of the central government, to assume any or all of the functions of the *state* governments on the basis of a report of the governor, whom the central government appoints. This 'President's Rule' clause was frequently misused by the central government, especially in the 1970s and early 1980s, when relations between the central government and *state* governments were unstable (Government of India 2002: para. 8.16). Thus, the Indian democratic regime ostensibly has a strong central government to retain the constituent *states*.

In addition, although the liberal democratic process has been maintained in a large part of the country, this democratic process can be overridden where there is danger of national integration, as in Jammu & Kashmir and in the northeast region. The central government has never accommodated the secessionist tendencies of these regions. It is understandable that a country with a diverse ethnic composition would adopt a centripetal trait to prevent the disintegration of the nascent state.

The Indian democratic regime, however, has assured substantial liberal democratic rights for most of its people, except for secessionist groups working in peripheral areas, such as Jammu & Kashmir and the northeast. Moreover, *state* governments have been actually enjoying a substantial degree of political freedom within the constitutional framework, with which the central government cannot easily interfere.

Land reforms in the 1950s, which were among the most important policies in independent India propagated by the central government under Nehru, for example, had never been implemented satisfactorily. The *state* governments, which were under the strong influence of landlords and the richer sections of society, actually never followed the direction of central government because the radical land reforms threatened to jeopardize their own power structures.

Another example of the substantial power of *states* is that the continuous use of English as an official language was assured in 1965 in the face of an anti-Hindi movement in Tamil Nadu.

Furthermore, the central government has made substantial concessions even to the secessionist movements. The centre bestowed statehood to Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Tripura in 1972, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987.

Thus, although the central government could be coercive to its

constituent units, when there is danger of the disintegration of the union, such coerciveness is rarely exerted. It is true, however, that the central government was oppressive during the period of the 'Internal Emergency' from 1975 to 1977 and against the secessionist movements mentioned above. However, except for these cases, it can be said that the *states* maintain substantial autonomy within the constitutional framework once stable *state* governments are established through elections, though unstable *state* governments are likely to incur intervention by the central government through, for example, the President's Rule.

This trait of substantial political autonomy on the part of *states* has become more conspicuous in the era of coalitional governments in the centre, which started at the end of the 1980s. After the end of the 1980s, every central government included *state* parties. Criticism by *state* governments of the 'arbitrary imposition of President's Rule' lasted until the middle of the 1980s and was not frequently heard after that period. In fact, the second commission on centre-*state* relations, chaired by Madan Mohan Punchhi, said, 'Politically, however, with the rise of regional parties and coalitions, States seemed to gain the upper hand in many matters' (Government of India 2010a: xxii).

Many Indian *states* have vast populations and large geographical areas, larger than most countries in Europe and Asia. Moreover, *states* have their own languages and cultures. Such *states* with substantial political autonomy can be assumed to be 'nations'. According to Gellner, a 'nation' is the product of a movement that aims to make political boundaries consistent with cultural boundaries (Gellner 1983). An Indian *state*, although not independent, almost matches this definition. We can assume that India is an aggregation of nations in this way; however, there are strong institutional or constitutional restrictions imposed on these 'nations'. A 'nation' might be called a 'proto-nation' in the case where the 'nation' is included within a state that limits its political freedom. Regimes like the Indian democracy that consist of a central government and autonomous-but-restricted 'nations' or proto-nations are called 'state-nations' by Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz and Yogendra Yadav in their recently published book *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies*.

A model similar to that of 'state-nations', characterized by the harmonious coexistence of multiple nations or proto-nations, is not new. The concept of 'cooperative federalism', for example, is one often used to depict a federation that peacefully accommodates proto-nations. Although there is conceptual variation within 'cooperative federalism', the key point is the harmonious coexistence of constituent units, namely, the central government and 'nations' or 'proto-nations', through negotiation and bargaining. 'Cooperative federalism' can be considered a general concept because it only emphasizes the cooperative aspect of the centre and constituent nations and is, in that sense, vague. It is a general aspect

of a federation.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, 'state-nations' is more specifically defined, therefore, sharper concept to understand clearly the characters of a federal state and the patterns of interaction between the state and constituent nations. The conceptualization is, in a sense, a challenge to the predominance of the traditional concept of 'nation-state'.

'State-nations' seems to be a useful conceptualization for understanding the stability of Indian democracy, especially in the era of the coalition government occurring after the 1980s. Stepan, Linz and Yadav assert that the success of Indian democracy can be explained by the 'state-nations' model. They further insist that such a 'state-nations' model can be 'crafted' in other countries that are also tormented by ethnic conflicts.

In this paper, I would like to examine the effectiveness of this concept to better understand Indian democracy. Then, I would like to argue that although it is true that India's 'state-nations' has contributed to the coexistence of various ethnic groups and, therefore, the stability of democracy, it has its own limitations. I further argue that India's model was created under unique social and historic contingencies and, therefore, cannot be easily crafted or replicated in other countries.

### THE CONCEPT OF 'STATE-NATIONS' AND INDIA

The concept of 'state-nations' seems to be devised to consider the possibility of the coexistence of multi-ethnic societies, especially their divisive and conflictive aspects. It is based on the understanding that a 'nation-state', which compels people with multiple ethnic and cultural identities to be forcefully integrated and homogenized, has produced too many violent conflicts and infringements on the rights of people to be absorbed in the 'nation'.

According to Stepan, Linz and Yadav, 'State-Nations' is not 'unitary nation-state' but 'federation' of 'nations' or 'nationalities'. It is, however, not a confederation consisting of multiple nation-states, which is mere aggregation of 'nation-states' without any strong centre which provide the overall institutional framework. As an institution, the concept of 'state-nations' is located between the concepts of 'unitary nation-state' and confederation. Stepan, Linz and Yadav noted four empirically verifiable features of state-nations, as follows:

First, despite multiple cultural identities among the citizens of the polity, there will be at the same time a high degree of *positive identification* with the state and pride in being citizens of that state. Second, citizens of the state will have *multiple but complementary* political identities and loyalties. Third, there will be a high degree of *institutional trust* in the most important constitutional, legal, and administrative components of the state. Fourth, by world democratic standards, there will be a comparatively high degree of *positive support for democracy across* all of the diverse groups of citizens in the country as well as for the specific state-wide democratic institutions through which the multicultural and possibly multinational polity is governed (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: 8).

They also argued that 'these patterns do not simply exist right from the beginning. 'State-nation' is not a matter of recognizing a pre-existing reality. We argue that 'state-nation' is all about crafting and is very much an outcome of deliberate policies and designs' (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: 8). In the state-nations so crafted, the legitimate public or political expression of active 'national' socio-cultural cleavages is recognized and balanced with constitutionally sanctioned respect for common symbols, institutions, and individual rights, thus maintaining multiple but complementary, as opposed to singular and conflictual, identities (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: 16). They further argued that 'asymmetrical federalism, in which some cultural prerogatives are constitutionally embedded for sub-units with salient and mobilized territorial cultural identities', is the least conflictual state structure (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: 9). They explain this concept as follows:

Why asymmetrical? In a symmetrical federal system, all units must have identical rights and obligations. It is politically possible, however, that some territorially concentrated and culturally diverse groups have in their history acquired prerogatives that they desire to retain or reacquire, and it is also possible that some tribal groups that control a large territory (such as the Mizos in India) would only agree to remain in or join the federation if some of their laws pertaining to such matters as land use or education, found nowhere else in the polity, were respected. Bargains and compromises on these issues, which might be necessary for peace, and voluntary membership in the political community are negotiable in an asymmetrical system but are normally unacceptable in a symmetrical system. (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: 18)

Thus, a 'state-nations' is a state consisting of asymmetrically patched together 'nations' in which most citizens have a positive identification with the state. In addition, citizens are linked to state or central government institutions with multiple but complementary political identities and trust, and they are supportive of democracy. The authors have demonstrated the existence of multiple but complementary political identities, citizens' higher trust of central government institutions and stronger support for democracy on the basis of several opinion polls, such as the *World Values Surveys*, *Indian National Election Study*, and *State of Democracy in South Asia*. The latter two are conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi.

The most important feature of 'state-nations' is its capacity to manage or control the potentially conflictual relations between the constituent nations through the democratic process. Federalism makes it possible for the citizens of the nations to hold their unique culture within the state. At the same time, the integration of the state is maintained by citizens' positive identification with the state, as well as their trust of the state. What connect the nations to the state are the citizens' multiple but complementary political identities.

According to Stepan, Linz and Yadav, the states closest to the 'state-

nations' model are Belgium, Canada, India, Spain, and Switzerland. Among these, the Indian case is especially important because of its size and ethnic heterogeneity. In fact, India is the most heterogeneous country in the world in terms of ethnicity and language (Asia Development Bank 2006: 54). India, as a 'state-nation', can be said to be an exception in terms of population, size, and ethnic complexity. States closest to the 'nation-state' model are Brazil, Austria, the United States, Germany, Australia and Argentina. A characteristic aspect of their argument is their emphasis on the possibility of 'crafting' 'state-nations'.

Stepan, Linz and Yadav present the concept of 'state-nations' as an ideal type of regime. I would like to examine several aspects of the Indian polity in contrast to the ideal type.

### FACTORS THAT MAKE INDIA A 'STATE-NATIONS'

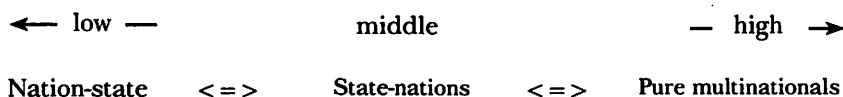
It is clear that India is a state consisting of asymmetrically patched together 'nations'. Additionally, it can be said that India has, by and large, successfully avoided crises of national disintegration within the 'state-nations' framework. India has been able to evade the dangers of large-scale destabilization or disintegration, which could have resulted from the process of compelling cultural homogenization and ethnic competition. Such destabilization due to cultural homogenization and ethnic competition frequently accompany the process of 'nation-state' building in many developing countries.

It deserves special mention that in India, the 'state-nations' system has been maintained in the electoral democracy. The electoral democracies in multi-ethnic societies, especially those societies that consist of geographically concentrated ethnic groups or nationalities, often lead to mutual alienation or exclusion through the electoral process by the 'outbidding' of ethnic demands by ethnic leaders, which could ultimately lead to the breakdown of the multi-ethnic society. Rabushka and Shepsle theorized such a possibility (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972: 80-92). The theoretical study by Rabushka and Shepsle suggests the weakness of 'state-nations' as a stable integrative institution.

According to the study by Stepan, Linz and Yadav, the intensity of political activation of multiple, territorially concentrated, socio-cultural 'national' identities is a very important factor influencing the evolution of the particular type of state. In Figure 1, the more politically activated the multiple, territorially concentrated, socio-cultural 'national' identities are, the more suitable the right hand side type of state is likely to be. Pure multi-national states, which are characterized by disintegration into small nation-states, are most likely to be a suitable solution if the proto-nations are politically highly activated, which makes it difficult for the proto-

nations or nationalities to share common political institution. Contrarily, a 'nation-state' is more likely to be created, for example, if the proto-nations within the state are not politically activated.

FIG. 1. INTENSITY OF POLITICAL ACTIVATION OF MULTIPLE, TERRITORIALLY CONCENTRATED, SOCIOCULTURAL 'NATIONAL' IDENTITIES AND IDEAL TYPES OF STATE



Source: Made by author based on Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: 10.

In the figure, 'state-nations' is conceptually located between the two extremes, which suggests that 'state-nations' might be theoretically unstable in the process of 'state-building', especially in a large country. If the political leaders of proto-nations begin ethnic 'outbidding' against each other, and mutually antagonistic sentiments between the proto-nations are intensified in democratic processes such as elections, the central government in the nascent state will not be able to endow substantial autonomy to the proto-nations or nationalities for fear of the possibility that once substantial autonomy is endowed, the proto-nations are likely to escalate their demands further, ultimately resulting in separatism or independence. If the central government cannot contain the 'outbidding' of leaders in proto-nations demanding more autonomy or violent ethnic conflicts breaks out between the proto-nations, the choice of central government might be either utter oppression or the disintegration of the state to small nation-states. In this case of ethnic 'outbidding' or violent 'conflict escalation', it would be very difficult for the central government to maintain peace by taking the 'middle path', namely, the 'state-nations' model.

Contrarily, if mutual 'outbidding' is weak, the central government will not consider it necessary to give substantial autonomy to the constituent proto-nations or nationalities.

This line of theoretical thinking has been persuasively discussed by several scholars. Chapman and Roeder, for example, demonstrated that following nationalist conflicts involving competing nation-state projects, the 'partition' of proto-nations is more effective than the alternative institutional configurations of 'de facto separations', 'autonomy', or 'unitarism' (i.e. the establishment of nation-state integrating all the proto-nations) to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of violence under democratic rule (Chapman and Roeder 2007). On the Indian subcontinent, the history of partitions between India and Pakistan in 1947 and Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971 amply and persuasively demonstrate the validity of this hypothesis.

Alternatively, the central government may take a tough position toward the independent movements of proto-nations to prevent the possibility of 'outbidding' or violent escalation from deteriorating into secession or disintegration. Such a strategy by the central government is likely to be a rational choice according to the study by Walter (Walter 2009). The central government should make no concessions to proto-nations easily.

The Indian central government under Nehru made no concessions to any secessionist movement. For example, he never made concessions to the demands of the Naga National Council, led by Angami Zapu Phizo, for independence or the near complete autonomy of Naga in 1947 in the northeast region. Rather, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 was enacted as an answer to the secessionist movements. The act enabled the armed forces in the 'disturbed areas' to exercise special powers, oppressing subversive groups freely without being sued. The act has caused various human rights violations and, therefore, has repeatedly faced protests for repeal by the people in the affected regions (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2005).

Another example is Kashmir, which is a Muslim-majority area that was integrated into India after the first war with Pakistan. Although Jammu & Kashmir is the only *state* to have its own constitution, and the *state* has been constitutionally guaranteed special status by Article 370, the special autonomous status has gradually been eroded. Through the first amendment of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir in 1959, the administration of the election for the two houses of the *state* legislature came under the control of the Election Commission of India (Lyngdoh 2004: 30), and the removal of the judges of the *State* High Court also came under the control of Parliament (Government of Jammu & Kashmir 1999: 77). Article 356 of the Indian Constitution, which provides for the 'President's Rule', began to apply to Jammu & Kashmir after December 1964. In 1974, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah, who was fighting for special autonomous status for Jammu & Kashmir as the leader of the National Conference, signed the 'Kashmir Accord', whereby the *state's* accession to India and the status quo of the special status of the *state* as enshrined in Article 370 of the Constitution of India were accepted with finality. In exchange for the accord, Sheikh returned as chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir (Naqash and Shah 1997: 120-1).

Besides, the most important democratic process, the Legislative Assembly election, has frequently encountered interference from the central government. It is said that the 1977 Assembly election was 'free and fair', with the Janata Party government being in the centre (Lyngdoh 2004: 130), and most likely, the 2008 Assembly election was also, by and large, 'free and fair' (Puri 2009). However, except for these elections, all other Assembly elections were said to have experienced interference from the central government.



Thus, from its independence, central governments, especially those under the Indian National Congress (hereafter 'Congress'), chose the strategy of being tough toward Kashmir, which was forcefully integrated into India and was gradually homogenized within Indian federalism. People's dissatisfaction with the centre resulted in an increase in violent conflicts after the 1980s. Although the international factor of neighbouring Pakistan is important, the more important factor is the restriction of political freedom.

Although there are signs of moderation in the secessionist movements in the northeast *states*, the case of Kashmir does not show the possibility of a fundamental solution in the near future.<sup>3</sup> The Kashmir case demonstrates that India does not completely fit the 'state-nations' model for the peaceful coexistence of proto-nations. It shows that once territorially concentrated ethnic identities are violently activated, it is difficult for the 'state-nations' model to provide a peaceful solution. To the extent that India must resort to utter oppression to quell its secessionist movements, India is considered to have deviated from the 'state-nations' model.

Indeed, the persistent existence of these secessionist movements in the periphery regions suggests either that 'state-nations' is essentially unstable or that there are important factors that make the Indian 'state-nations' model work. As shown above, Stepan, Linz and Yadav consider Belgium, Canada, India, Spain, and Switzerland to be closest to the 'state-nations' model. Among these, India is outstanding in terms of population size and ethnic heterogeneity or complexity. The populations of Canada and Spain were approximately 35 and 47 million, respectively, in 2012, whereas India's population is 1237 million, and India is far more heterogeneous in terms of ethnic and linguistic composition. Understandably, a smaller country such as Belgium or Switzerland would be more easily able to adopt the 'state-nations' model because the differences in interests between the constituent 'nations' or 'proto-nations' in a smaller country are more likely to be managed, for example, through a consociational setup (Lijphart 1977). Indeed, the basic traits of consociationalism, such as a 'grand coalition of major parties', 'mutual veto of ethnic groups', and 'proportionality of representation of ethnic groups' are typically found in these small countries but not in India.<sup>4</sup> It would be surprising for a country of the size of India to maintain the 'state-nations' model, even leaving out the peripheral regions. The key to understanding the exceptional case of India is the extreme heterogeneity of Indian society.

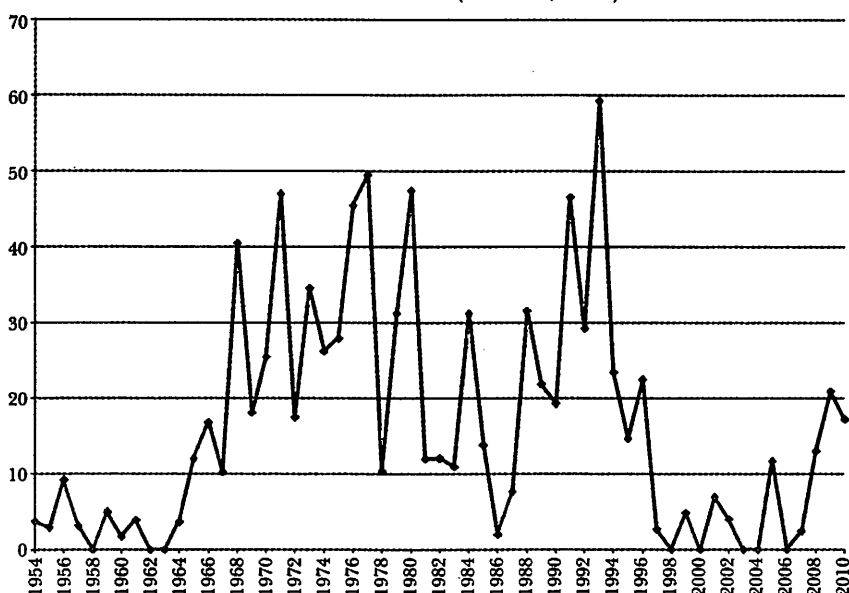
#### MULTIPLE 'INTRA-STATE' HETEROGENEITY

Except in the peripheral regions, the 'state-nations' model seems to be effective in explaining the coexistence of proto-nations within the Indian

state. The 'cooperative federalism' appears to function well. There has been no massive and violent ethno-nationalistic movement in any *state* which can substantially damage Indian cooperative federalism, except in peripheral *states*. Although there were many occasions that could have triggered and escalated ethno-nationalistic sentiments among proto-nations in other countries, in India, the conflicts with ethnic connotations did not lead to unmanageable or disintegrative ethnic or nationalistic conflicts.

For example, there was a surge of discord and conflict between the centre and the *states* from the latter half of the 1960s to the early 1990s, which is shown in Figure 2. The graph in the figure shows the total number of months the President's Rule was invoked in all *states* and union territories. Although the use of the President's Rule may be traced to various causes, it can be understood as an indication of political disturbances of *states* or interference by the central government. Frequent political disturbances of *states*, which the central government cannot leave unattended, or interferences by the central government could result in instigating ethno-nationalistic sentiments in the disturbed *state* if the role of the central government is not recognized as legitimate by the people in the *state*. Although there were frequent, and sometimes illegitimate, interferences by the central government, they did not result in the escalation of ethnic conflicts in the main *states* (meaning those *states* except Jammu and Kashmir and north-east regions).

FIG. 2. TOTAL MONTHS OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IN STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES (MONTHS/YEAR)



Note: Data does not include 'Governor's Rule' in Jammu & Kashmir.

Source: Created by author from Lok Sabha Secretariat 2010: 100-2.

For example, the illegitimate dismissal of Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh in August 1984 by the Congress government under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi raised anti-centre sentiments among the people in the *state*, which in turn heightened the popularity of N.T. Rama Rao, along with regional sentiments. This heightened regional sentiment, however, did not lead to extreme ethnic 'outbidding' and unmanageable conflicts.

In the case of the Punjab conflict, it must be noted that one of the most important causes of the escalation of violent conflict in Punjab from the 1980s to the early 1990s was the unscrupulous interference by the Congress central government. This interference resulted in violent conflicts in which more than 20,000 people were killed (Singh 2000: 163-4). These violent conflicts, however, were fought between Sikh militants and security forces or police, not between ordinary Sikhs and Hindus. In this sense, these violent outbreaks were not ethnic conflicts. Once the Sikh militants were removed, the situation rapidly normalized following the 1992 Assembly election.

The key to making the 'state-nations' model effective in the main part of India lies in the social structure restricting ethnic 'outbidding' and 'conflict escalation' that would politically activate territorially concentrated, socio-cultural 'national' identities. Ostensibly, it seems strange that ethnic outbidding and conflict escalation between *states* are not easily developed in the main part of India, despite numerous seeds of potentially dangerous conflicts between various ethnic groups. Of course, it would be an inappropriate hypothesis to suggest that the mere mixture of various ethnic groups automatically leads to distrust among those groups, resulting in ethnic conflicts (Anderson and Paskeviciute 2006; Bahry et al. 2005; Bjørnskov 2006). It is true, however, that there are various seeds of conflict between religious groups, castes, classes, etc., in Indian society, where socio-economic differences and discrimination are remarkable between social groups.

One reason for this is that potentially dangerous ethnic cleavages do not necessarily overlap with *state* boundaries. Most important among these potential cleavages is religion, especially between Hindus and Muslims. Such religious cleavages do not overlap with *state* boundaries, except in Jammu & Kashmir, where there is a Muslim majority. Rather, the cleavages crosscut the *state* boundaries. Thus, the threat and influence of communal violence in a *state*, for example, is likely to be restricted by *state* boundaries and, therefore, is unlikely to lead to confrontation between *states*. Even if communal violence breaks out, it is likely to be restricted to only a few *states*. When the Babri masjid in Ayodhya was demolished in December 1992, for example, communal violence broke out in the northern and western *states*, but major riots happened only in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Even in the post-Godhra communal riot in Gujarat in 2002, which was the largest riot since independence, violence did not spread

to neighbouring *states*. In the main part of India, although communal tension and violence might cause serious 'intra-*state*' division, it is unlikely to create 'inter-*state*' divisions.

In the same way, there is no major social category that overlaps *state* boundaries. The category of 'dalits', i.e. Scheduled Castes (former 'Untouchables'; hereafter, 'SCs'), for example, spread throughout India but generally do not overlap *state* boundaries. Moreover, SCs represent an aggregate category that includes various SC castes and, therefore, is socially and politically divided within itself, which makes it virtually impossible for them to articulate their interests and to demand their own geo-political area in the form of a *state*. Thus, cleavages based on untouchability, which might be potentially conflictual, also could not develop any claim demanding autonomous territory.

In the case of 'Scheduled Tribes' ('STs'), although the population of STs is often concentrated in particular areas because of their historical as well as social origins, they have never been politically integrated or become strong enough to demand their own *state*, except those in the northeast areas. The relatively small population of these groups is another reason for their political weakness. SCs constitute 16.6 per cent of the population, while STs make up 8.6 per cent, according to the 2011 population census.

The category of 'Other Backward Classes' ('OBCs') also does not overlap *state* boundaries, nor is this group able to integrate the interests of the social groups included within it. OBCs is an artificially created social category of backward classes that differs from SCs and STs. OBCs is a category that, by definition, consists of socially and educationally backward classes or castes, except for SCs and STs, which have been historically oppressed due to the social stigma of untouchability or segregation. It is obvious that the OBCs, which include various heterogeneous classes or castes, cannot be the social basis of an ethnic or nationalistic movement.

Thus, in the main part of India, even if a political party adopts a strategy of ethnic 'outbidding' or 'conflict escalation', such a strategy is unlikely to result in 'between-*states*' confrontation due to 'intra-*state*' heterogeneity. It is almost impossible for a party to rally major communities or castes of the *state* and play them against the people in another *state*.

From this perspective, perhaps it would be suggestive to examine the case of the secessionist movement of 'Dravida Nadu' immediately prior to independence, when there could have been several different courses of state-formation. A separate 'Dravida Nadu' was called for by Ramaswami Naicker, who led the non-Brahman movement. He held the first 'Dravida Nadu Separation Day' on 1 July 1939, which supported the cause of Tamil cultural identity and demanded the independence of southern India. However, the social basis of the non-Brahman elites was narrow. They

were essentially wealthy, orthodox members of Tamil Nadu society (Barnett 1976: 28, 53). Although the Dravida movement was continuously spearheaded by Dravida Kazhagam, which was established in 1944 under Ramaswami Naicker, Dravida Kazhagam or its offshoot, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which was separated from Dravida Kazhagam in 1949 by C.N. Annadurai, did not succeed in mobilizing the major social stratum of the province (pre-independence period) or *state* (post-independence period) and radicalizing the movement. Once Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam came to power in the *state* following the 1967 Assembly election, the Dravida movement was integrated into Indian federalism, and the separatism rapidly disappeared (Viswanathan 1994: 94).

There is no regional party in the main part of India that calls for secession on the basis of a particular ethnic identity. Although there were sporadic regional movements demanding new separate *states*, even after the linguistic reorganization of the *states* in 1956,<sup>5</sup> such movements were hardly called secessionist. It is true that there were ethnic sentiments, as well as a process of ethnic-identity formation that resulted in *state* formation, such as the bifurcation of Punjab to new Punjab and Haryana in 1966, as well as the creation of the new *states* of Uttarakhand (formerly 'Uttaranchal') from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand from Bihar, and Chhattisgarh from Madhya Pradesh in 2000.<sup>6</sup> However, these ethnic sentiments or ethnic identities did not appear to be radical, most likely due to intra-movement ethnic heterogeneity. Moreover, the successful creation of *states* based on identity satisfied regional ethnic sentiments, which, in turn, contributed to the overall stabilization of Indian federalism, namely, the 'state-nations' system.

The multiple intra-*state* heterogeneity that prevents ethnicity-based particular socio-political identities from being crystallized is the basic factor deterring ethnic 'outbidding' or 'conflict escalation'. Manor said, 'The existence of so many different types of social forces prevents conflict from being concentrated along one particular fault line in Indian society—as has tended to happen in Canada and, more destructively, in Sri Lanka' (Manor 1995: 121). Identity politics based on ethnicities would have shown completely different features in India if the ethnic structure in *states* had been much simpler.

In addition to multiple heterogeneity, historical contingency, namely, path-dependency, must be noted as an important factor in understanding the formation of the 'state-nations' system in India. Two points must be identified in this connection. First, it is very important that the *states* with intra-*state* heterogeneity were asymmetrically patched together by British colonialism. If there had not been British colonialism, the present form of Indian federal *states* would not have emerged in 1947. Second, it is also very important that the central government under the Indian National

Congress succeeded the Indian state without experiencing independent war or severe violent movements, except for the partition with Pakistan. Large-scale internal violence would have radically changed or destroyed the traditional heterogeneous social structure. The continuation of the traditional heterogeneous social structure in the main part of India gave socio-political stability to the nascent Indian *states* and the central government. In fact, Nehru's Congress government did not allow the development of radicalism that might have had a disintegrative effect on the state-nations. The Nehru government, for example, swiftly oppressed the radical class movements led by the Communist Party of India, such as the Telangana insurrection from 1946 to 1951. It was also very reluctant to intervene in the land reform process in the *states*, which was considered necessary for transformation of the feudalistic rural society, although the land reform was a *state* subject according to Indian Constitution. It must also be remembered that the partition between India and Pakistan resulted in the large-scale migration of Hindus and Sikhs to India, on the one hand, and Muslims to Pakistan, on the other. The partition brought out large-scale violence and mass killings in Punjab, which was bifurcated to Indian Punjab and Pakistan Punjab. It is important that in the process of large-scale migration and violence, the ethnic composition of Indian Punjab changed substantially to a bi-ethnic society and that substantial land reforms were realized in Indian Punjab (Singh 2000: 90). The simplification of the ethnic structure and the change in land-ownership structure seems to be one of the important historical factors leading to the radicalization of the Sikh separatist movement.

The radical transformation of rural society in line with classes, which radical peasant movements or land reforms could have brought about, would have simultaneously caused reorganization of the ethnic structure because the class structure and ethnic structure, by and large, overlap in India. However, India did not experience such a large-scale radical transformation, except for Punjab and several other regions,<sup>7</sup> because of which Indian society has preserved its multiple heterogeneity.

This social heterogeneity has, as explained so far, the effect of preventing ethnic 'outbidding' and 'conflict escalation'. In addition, it also has a larger effect of giving stability to democracy beyond the ethnic dimension. As Tsebelis argues, federalism itself provides a multiplicity of 'veto players', which gives policy stability to democracy (Tsebelis 2002: Chapter 6). Moreover, the social heterogeneity of India leads to more veto players in *states*. A serious fear was that the combined effect of federalism and social heterogeneity might create multiple veto players in Indian democracy, which would provide policy and political stability on the one hand, but 'immobility' on the other. The typical example of such political immobility was the failure of land reforms after independence. In addition to the fear that the land reforms were likely to radicalize the

rural society, the multiplicity of veto players in *states*, including politically influential landlords and rich peasants of various ethnic backgrounds, could dampen the political will of the policy makers in both the *state* governments and the central government.

The negative aspects of such political immobility were not limited to the land-reform policy. The lack of political momentum due to immobility was also obvious concerning social reforms, especially for the weaker sections of society, although several affirmative policies, such as reservations for SCs/STs, were created by the regime after independence. The difficulties of SCs who were contained in the majority of caste Hindu, for example, were not eliminated with sufficient speed. Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of the SCs and the chairman of the Constituent Assembly, said, 'The Untouchables are surrounded by a vast mass of Hindu population which is hostile to them and which is not ashamed of committing any inequity or atrocity against them' (Ambedkar 1947: 46).

Thus the 'state-nations' model based on multiple social heterogeneity would be inherently immobile if it had not been for extensive socio-political change in the society. It is not strange, therefore, that more time is required for the weaker sections of society to move from an immobile political situation and create their own party because their social awakening needed long-term socio-political mobilization resulting from a series of elections at various levels, as well as socio-economic development such as the extension of primary education. The Bahujan Samaj Party, for example, emerged only in 1984 (Pai 1993: 63-7). That party, which has the SCs as its core support base, came to power in Uttar Pradesh in June 1995 and March 1997 with the support of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and from 2007 to 2012 without support from other parties. Thus, 'gradualism' is inherent in the nature of Indian democracy.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS: INDIA AS A UNIQUE STATE-NATION

In this paper, I have argued that, theoretically, the 'state-nations' model of democracy propagated by Stepan, Linz and Yadav is inherently unstable. However, the Indian 'state-nations' actually appears to be stable. Although there was and is oppression in the peripheral regions of Jammu and Kashmir, the northeast region, etc., except for these regions, the 'state-nations' model seems to adequately explain the stability of the Indian state in the democratic process. Thus, there is a gap between what the theory anticipates and the actual situation. I have tried to fill the gap by emphasizing the importance of multiple intra-*state* heterogeneity, which prevents ethnic outbidding and conflict escalation. It is because the multiple 'intra-*state*' heterogeneity is likely to prevent ethnic outbidding or conflict escalation. In addition, the Indian 'state-nations' were created

by unique historical contingencies. First, the Indian 'state-nations' were essentially formed by British colonialism, which asymmetrically patched together the proto-nations or nationalities. Second, the intra-*state* heterogeneity was basically preserved, or not destroyed, due to the absence of large-scale violent independence movements or radical class movements in the main part of India after independence. In view of these particularities, the success of the 'state-nations' in the main part of India is unique and cannot be generalized. State-nations of India's size are not likely to be reproduced in other areas. Although the study by Stepan, Linz and Yadav insisted that 'state-nations', as a desirable solution to ethnic conflicts, can be 'crafted', such 'crafting' would be extremely difficult or impossible in a large country unless there is a social or political structure that can prevent or dampen ethnic outbidding or conflict escalation.

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant pillars of the stability of Indian democracy is the 'state-nations' system created by India's unique historical contingencies. However, it is also true that the Indian 'state-nations' is an exception. Several studies concerning the stability of democracy treat India as an exception to general theory. A study by Przeworski et al., which examined the relation between democracy and development, for example, said that India could not be 'democracy' but should be dictatorship on the basis of their statistical analysis (Przeworski et al. 2000: 276). The 'exceptionally' stable democracy in India has its basis in the 'state-nations' system, based on multiple 'intra-*state*' heterogeneity, which is a product of unique socio-historical contingencies, and, therefore, could not be replicated in other countries.

## NOTES

1. According to Basu, 75 per cent of the new constitution drafted by B.R. Ambedkar inherited the Government of India Act of 1935 (Basu 1965: 5).
2. Concerning the cooperative federalism in India, see, Austin (1972: Chapter 8); Arora and Verney (eds.) (1995).
3. The report of the second center-state relations said that there has been improvement in the overall security scenario in the northeast region as well as in Kashmir (Government of India 2010b: 78, 88). In the case of Kashmir, however, the recent decline in terrorism and violence seems to be due to the improvement of relations with neighboring Pakistan and the increasing deterrent power of police and armed forces, which can suppress the eruption of violence. In fact, there seems to be no fundamental change in the structure of ethnic conflict (Gangahar 2013).
4. Lijphart insisted that Indian democracy is also a case of a consociational system (Lijphart 1996), but Brass clearly refuted this argument (Brass 1991: 333-45).
5. The linguistic reorganization was necessitated because of the irrational state boundaries created during the colonial period. See, Government of India (1955).
6. Regarding the creation of three *states*, namely, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh in 2000, although 'ethnicity' is one of the important factors, it is not the decisive factor. See, Tillin, Louise (2011).



7. There had been various grassroots social movements, which had the potential to radically transform the rural society. See, Shah (1988).

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