

Searching for Synergies, Making Majorities: The Demands for Pakistan and Maharashtra

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Abstract

This paper re-examines the Pakistan demand as part of a wider ‘federal moment’ in India, by addressing its connections with the coterminous calls for Samyukta Maharashtra in the context of the Cabinet Mission of spring/summer 1946. It highlights how the twinned processes of democratisation and provincialisation during the interwar years informed these demands. Both Muslim and Maratha representatives looked to locate and secure autonomous political spaces that would better secure their political representation. Their demands exemplified a shift away from a commensurative logic expressed through separate representation in the legislatures, and towards support for majority rule at the provincial level.

Keywords:

autonomy; community; democracy; Maharashtra; majority; minority; Pakistan; partition; province; territory.

Introduction

This paper argues that the demands for both Pakistan and Samyukta ('united') Maharashtra were the upshot of a cumulative shift away from a politics framed around separate representation for minority communities in the legislature – whether separate electorates or reserved seats – that emerged amongst certain Muslim and Maratha politicians during the interwar years. It highlights how both Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra can be conceived as demands for the establishment of autonomous territorial units within a federal union, imagined on the basis of the majority demographic status of certain caste, linguistic, and religious communities (or 'nations') within particular administrative spaces. The emergence of these demands was shaped not only by engagement with developing democratic institutions and an extended franchise, but also by the materialisation of the province as a scale of increased political significance in South Asia during the late colonial period. In establishing the shared processes through which these demands emerged, this paper avoids treating the Pakistan demand as an aberration in an otherwise straightforward anti-colonial nationalist trajectory towards independence. Simultaneously, it escapes from a rather straightforward and somewhat teleological narrative that suggests partition's inevitability. In fact, up to the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 1946, one particular iteration of the Pakistan demand might be considered as an example of a wider 'federal moment', which emerged during constitutional negotiations over the future status of an independent India, and which shared common antecedents with other demands for the establishment of autonomous territorial units. After the collapse of the Cabinet Mission's three-tiered proposal, the slide towards the final logic of partition became increasingly inexorable. But in the interregnum, between the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and the final decision to partition, another possibility for Pakistan,

based around a federal solution to the ‘communal problem’, shared many commonalities with other demands for regional autonomy that were being articulated elsewhere within the Indian subcontinent.

In this telling, the idea of Pakistan as a territorial entity was capable of being incorporated within a loosely arranged federal union constituted by autonomous federating units. It helped, of course, that the abstract idea of Pakistan was always, in and of itself, somewhat ambiguous and malleable, capable of being shaped according to the whims and exigencies of its various proponents. Noting such ambiguity has not only become something of a historical axiom,¹ but has stimulated a great deal of historiographical debate, particularly since the publication of Ayesha Jalal’s provocative ‘revisionist’ thesis in 1985. An older scholarship had previously traced the demand for partition back to the Lahore Resolution of March 1940, through which it was considered that partition and the creation of a separate nation-state of Pakistan in August 1947 was the logical culmination of the politics of ‘Muslim separatism’.² For Jalal, by contrast, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League and Pakistan’s founding father, did not necessarily seek a separate sovereign Muslim nation-state, and might actually have ultimately desired to secure Muslim interests within India in a loose, confederal arrangement.³ Such an arrangement would be based upon two powerful federations (one bringing together Muslim majority provinces, one Hindu majority provinces), and a weak centre defined by a

¹ However, this axiom has been more recently contested in the work of Venkat Dhulipala. See Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 7-16.

² R. J. Moore, ‘Jinnah and the Pakistan Demand’, *Modern Asian Studies* [henceforth *MAS*], 17.4 (1983), 529-561; Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1984); Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); for a more recent and more partisan account along the same lines, see Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000).

³ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

commitment to parity between these two federations. More recently, Christophe Jaffrelot has criticised Jalal's thesis for 'suppos[ing] that Jinnah had a well-defined political agenda', arguing instead that his thinking was confused by 'major contradictions that resulted in counterproductive decisions'.⁴ Yet Jaffrelot does not completely disregard Jalal's most provocative idea, namely that Jinnah and other leading League representatives did not initially nor necessarily desire a separate nation-state: 'Jinnah may have put his quest for parity in his programme as a basis for negotiation in the hopes simply of obtaining a greater share than what the Muslims actually represented [i.e. within an Indian Union]'.⁵

Others have argued that Jalal's interpretation is too heavily focused on political calculations and individual motivations, at the expense of the importance of cultural and religious ideals.⁶ Faisal Devji, who has instead endeavoured to focus on ideas ('the forms of argumentation and lines of reasoning that both transcend and survive such intentionality to shape the prose of history'), has made one of the most eloquent and thoughtful of these critiques.⁷ In *Muslim Zion*, which makes explicit the connections behind the creation of both Israel and Pakistan, Devji focuses upon 'religion [as] the sole basis of Muslim nationality', at the expense of 'other forms of collective belonging, such as blood and soil...'.⁸ Like Jaffrelot, Devji also goes on to argue that ever since the emergence of the conception of 'Hindu majority, Muslim minority' in the legislative formulations of the nineteenth century, Muslim representatives had sought ways and means to move beyond this distinction and to

⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 93.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 30; Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*.

⁷ Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

promote parity between the two communities.⁹ However, even if Muslims in Hindu-majority areas were Pakistan's strongest supporters, and the idea of Pakistan (whether manifested as a separate sovereign entity or an autonomous unit within India) was theoretically imagined to include all of India's Muslims, beyond the abstract ideal it ultimately required some basis in territorial and demographic reality. Venkat Dhulipala has pointed to contemporary maps contained within the growing body of works on Pakistan during the 1940s as evidence of an increase in territoriality.¹⁰ Equally, all of the lines on these maps, whether premised on the Muslim League's claims to the entirety of Bengal and Punjab¹¹, or on Ambedkar's idea to partition these provinces as taken up in the Rajaji formula¹², were delineated on the basis of the majority numerical status of Hindu and Muslim communities in particular pockets of territory, something we might refer to in shorthand as the 'territorialisation of number'.¹³ Rather than escaping the growing significance of number as a consequence of interwar democratisation, contained within certain iterations of the Pakistan demand was recognition of the significance of number at the provincial (and district) level.

These elite proposals aligned with at least some of the ideas being articulated by popular sympathisers with the Pakistan demand. In fact, Jinnah and the League had garnered support amongst Muslims in Muslim-majority provinces by suggesting that

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 51.

¹⁰ Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, pp. 5, 22.

¹¹ See, for example, M.A. Jinnah, 'Message to the Bombay Presidency Provincial Muslim League Conference held at Hubli on the 26th and 27th May, 1940', in *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, ed. by Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1942), p. 163.

¹² B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan, or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Thacker and Company Limited, 1946), in *Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, ed. by V. Moon (New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 2014 [1990]), pp. 513-515.

¹³ I borrow this phrase from Anupama Rao. See Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), p. 135.

Pakistan (whether it was to be a federation within a confederal formula or separate nation-state) was to be ‘a loose structure in which each province would enjoy considerable autonomy’.¹⁴ In the Muslim-minority United Provinces, popular enthusiasm for the idea of a separate and territorially distinctive Pakistan amongst Muslims was frequently framed around cultural and theological arguments articulated by the province’s *ulama* (Islamic scholars). But whilst Dhulipala therefore argues that the idea of Pakistan assumed greater ‘clarity, substance and popularity in late-colonial north India’, ambiguity in popular conceptions between provinces still remained.¹⁵ In fact, in Muslim Bengal the idea of Pakistan came to mean something notably different. As Neilesh Bose has pointed out in this context, Pakistan could also mean ‘a struggle for freedom not just for one *desh* [nation], but for many *deshes*, many *jatis* [castes], as India is a large federation of *jatis*’.¹⁶ In this telling, Pakistan, as an idea or concept that prioritised a federal solution composed of autonomous units, could be equally applicable to other territories beyond the northeast and northwest, and to communities beyond the religious.

Indeed, other communities that were equally conscious of the potential threat of caste Hindu and north Indian majoritarianism took up similar demands for autonomy, evident, for example, in the albeit ephemeral demands for Dalitstan and Dravidistan. Such claims, also often constituted on the basis of a distinct ‘nationhood’, were not necessarily framed as demands for separation from the Indian union, but were considered viable techniques through which to gain better recognition within it. Rather than sharing political power in a wider deliberative body in Bombay, the proponents of Samyukta Maharashtra were concerned with domination, albeit in a

¹⁴ Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox*, p. 96; see also Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*.

¹⁵ Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, p. 18.

¹⁶ Neilesh Bose, ‘Purba Pakistan Zindabad: Bengali Visions of Pakistan, 1940-1947’, *MAS*, 48.1 (2014), 1-36 (p. 8).

more limited political arena. In this sense, their demands for political autonomy reflected certain iterations of the Pakistan demand, albeit reframed in the context of communal demographic equations related to caste and language, rather than religion. This paper therefore examines how certain understandings of what both Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra entailed up to May 1946 emerged out of a related process, in which both Muslim and Maratha representatives increasingly equated democracy with majority rule at the provincial scale during the late colonial period.

The Making of a Muslim Majority

Although, as we have already noted, the Pakistan demand remained somewhat ambiguous and vague¹⁷, it was frequently interpreted on the basis that Muslims, whilst forming a minority of the total population, constituted a majority community in certain large and recognisable areas of the subcontinent. In *India Divided*, published in 1946, the prominent Congressman Rajendra Prasad recognised as much, when, ruminating on the scheme for ‘Muslim zones’ set out in the Lahore Resolution, he wrote,

One idea was that the Muslim zones should be a compact one and should have as large a proportion of Muslims in its population as possible by excluding all those areas from it where the Muslims were in a minority, so that a large Muslim majority with a small non-Muslim minority could manage the affairs of the zone much as the Muslims desired ... The other school was in favour of taking as large a portion of India as was possible within the Muslim zone, if only a Muslim majority, no matter if it was a small majority, could be secured.¹⁸

¹⁷ See, for example, Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox*, p. 96.

¹⁸ Rajendra Prasad, *India Divided* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs Limited, 1947 [1946]), p. 220.

The League's attempts to resolve the 'Hindu-Muslim question', then, were not only premised on an abstract demand for self-determination, but also involved the practical delineation of territory on the basis of communal demographics. Prasad continued to criticise the 'reluctance on the part of the President of the League to disclose the scheme in its entirety', describing Jinnah's attempts as tending towards 'obscurity, vagueness and ambiguity'.¹⁹ But whilst Jinnah, primarily because of the political posturing he deemed necessary to garner support, may have been reluctant to clarify aspects of what exactly was meant by Pakistan, he did recognise that the linkages between community and territory were of critical significance to any iteration of this demand. After 1940, Jinnah regularly made reference to the Muslim-majority provinces of Bengal, Northwest Frontier, Punjab and Sind to support his claim that Pakistan was already in existence within India.²⁰ By situating Pakistan as a specific entity within a particular sub-continental space, Jinnah replicated earlier references to the geographical rootedness of a South Asian Muslim homeland, whether in Muhammad Iqbal's presidential address to the Muslim League in 1930, or in the 1933 anagram through which Pakistan first came to be named.²¹

In one sense, the demand for Pakistan marked a radical departure from earlier League policy, in which Muslims came to be presented as constituting a nation, rather than a community. In this formulation, claiming the status of the former provided an opportunity to escape the strictures of the latter, in which a Muslim minority would otherwise be at the mercy of a perpetual Hindu majority. Yet, in another sense,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 220.

²⁰ Jinnah, 'Message to the Bombay Presidency Provincial Muslim League Conference'.

²¹ The anagram was the brainchild of Cambridge student Rehmat Ali, and literally meant 'land of the pure'. Its geographical rootedness was evident in the meanings behind the letters that made up the actual anagram: 'P' referred to Punjab; 'A' to the Afghans (or Pathans of North West Frontier Province); 'K' to Kashmir; 'S' to Sindh; and the 'tan' to Baluchistan. Significantly, this only applied to what came to constitute West Pakistan; Bengal was missing from the equation.

Pakistan as an idea also reflected older efforts by Muslim politicians to territorialise number, by which political capital could be made out of the communal demographics of particular administrative spaces. By focusing on these earlier efforts during the interwar years, we are better placed to track the synergies between the demands for Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra in the 1940s, particularly with regards to the creation of communal majority constituencies at the provincial level. And critical to the emergence of such constituencies was the measured introduction of democratic forms of governance during the 1920s and 1930s.

Rather than focusing on some of the other significant implications of a gradual process of democratisation in British India, both contemporaries and historians have often been quick to apportion responsibility for ‘Muslim separatism’ to the creation of communal electorates from 1909 on. Writing in his book *The Discovery of India* whilst in jail during the Second World War, the prominent Congressman Jawaharlal Nehru, who would go on to be the first Prime Minister of an independent India, described them as ‘encourag[ing] separatist tendencies and prevent[ing] the growth of national unity ... Out of them have grown ... the demand for a splitting up of India’.²² More vocal still were many members of the Constituent Assembly of India, a body tasked with establishing India’s first constitution, which eventually came to the majority decision to abolish separate electorates entirely.²³ Equally, when historians have considered these ‘communal’ demands, Muslim representatives are likewise most frequently perceived to engage with democratic forms through communalised strategies of commensuration. By commensuration, borrowing from Anupama Rao’s reading of the work of Ernesto Laclau, I refer here to attempts within a liberal

²² Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004 [1946]), p. 389.

²³ Rochana Bajpai, *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011).

democratic order to manufacture equivalence between groups or communities that are otherwise dissimilar, or incommensurable.²⁴ Such strategies are evident in the demands for separate electorates for India's Muslims, which came to be perceived as mechanisms through which to potentially equalise their minority status vis-à-vis the Hindu majority. This was perceived as particularly pressing in the context of the threats posed by the gradual process of democratisation within provincial spaces initiated during the interwar years.

Accordingly, because such commensurative practices were most often substantiated in opposition to a generalised Hindu majority, it became common amongst both colonial policymakers and Congress nationalists (regardless of whether they professed supposedly 'secular' or 'Hindu' persuasions²⁵) to equate the language of universal rights with a Hindu constituency. Mrinalini Sinha and Eleanor Newbiggin, for example, have carefully demonstrated the ways in which emerging notions of democratic governance in late colonial India were often conflated with the idea of a 'natural' Hindu majority, in which 'one man, one vote' perpetuated a system of Hindu dominance.²⁶ However, claiming the status of a numerical minority in need of democratic equalisation through separate electorates did not exhaust all of the possible political avenues for Muslims during the interwar years. And equally, majoritarian democratic models could also be related to other communities in alternative spaces. In this regard, until recently little attention has been paid to the

²⁴ Rao, *The Caste Question*, pp. 20, 131.

²⁵ It is worth pointing out that this 'secular' versus 'Hindu nationalism' dichotomy within the Congress, with the former based on a Nehruvian form of secularism, itself does not stand up to concerted scrutiny. See, William Gould, 'Contesting Secularism in Colonial and Postcolonial North India Between the 1930s and 1950s', *Contemporary South Asia*, 14.4 (2005), pp. 481-494.

²⁶ Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 14; Eleanor Newbiggin, *The Hindu Family and the Emergence of Modern India: Law, Citizenship and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 8-9.

significant implications of the British devolution of power to the provinces after 1919.²⁷

British administrators had long understood Indian society as being primarily ordered on the basis of distinct caste, linguistic and religious communities, rather than the individual. As each specific community was understood to adhere to a particular uniform set of values and behavioural traits, the complexities of ordinary peoples' everyday identities were frequently glossed over and ignored.²⁸ During the decades after the First World War, however, these ideas were now politicised in a completely novel manner. In a new milieu exemplified by a growing franchise and the democratisation of representative government, older colonial practices that sought to count and classify different communities, such as the decennial census and gazetteers, now became caught up in questions about electoral weight and adequate political representation. As a consequence, majority and minority communities within India, whether defined on the basis of caste, language, or religion, came to be newly considered as political constituencies.

Equally significant to these developments were questions about territory and space.²⁹ Whilst often taken as a pre-determined given, the process through which British India's administrative boundaries were formed had important implications

²⁷ For a similar point, see, David Gilmartin, 'Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57.4 (1998), 1068-1095 (p. 1073, fn. 3); the papers on Indian constitutionalism in a special issue of *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* [henceforth *CSSAAME*], 36.1 (2016), 42-101, mark an initial attempt to contribute to greater understandings of this process of provincialisation.

²⁸ Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Lisa Mitchell, *Language, Emotion and Politics in South India: The Making of a Mother Tongue* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

²⁹ Ankush Agrawal and Vikas Kumar, 'Cartographic Conflicts within a Union: Finding Land for Nagaland in India', *Political Geography*, 61 (2017), 123-147.

upon whether an individual residing in a certain village or town constituted part of a majority or minority community in a particular electoral constituency, administrative district, or province, as well as at the all-India level. The interwar period also encouraged the ‘provincialisation’ of Indian politics, in which the provinces of British India emerged as an alternative scale and (semi-) autonomous spaces with some limited forms of political responsibility. Within this changing political environment, we might see provincial boundaries as emerging as a new kind of institutional framework, in which different communities now entered into competition with one another over the distribution of state patronage and resources and governmental representation.³⁰ Rather than just dwelling on the creation of separate electorates for Muslims across India, then, we might think about the way interwar provincialisation recast whole communities as majorities and minorities within the provinces, territorialising number in ways which often departed from the archetype of ‘Hindu majority, Muslim minority’ at the centre. As such, struggles to redraw provincial boundaries can be understood as attempts to recalibrate the advantages being conferred upon certain communities at the expense of others.

For our purposes, this context is particularly significant when considering the debates leading up to the publication of the Nehru Report in August 1928. At this juncture, Jinnah undertook to give up the aforementioned separate electorates, which Muslims had first received under the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. In return, Jinnah and thirty other prominent Muslim politicians made a number of relatively new

³⁰ Louise Tillin, *Remapping India: New States and Their Political Origins* (London: Hurst, 2013), p. 21; cf. John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal, eds, *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1880-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); David Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1976]).

demands that came to be known as the Delhi Muslim Proposals, three of which are indicative of the importance of ‘provincialisation’, and the way in which these proposals might be seen as an antecedent to certain iterations of the Pakistan demand. First, they maintained that the Muslim-majority area of Sind should be separated from the rest of Bombay Presidency, of which it had been a part since 1847, shortly after its annexation by British forces. Second, they suggested that Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier, again Muslim-majority areas, should be accorded full provincial status, rather than being ruled directly by the British from the centre as part of a chief commissionership. Finally, they recommended that a system of proportional representation on communal lines be introduced in the Muslim-majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab.³¹

The Delhi Muslim Proposals suggest that at least some members of the League were already attempting to escape the strictures of minority status, which they argued placed them in perpetual subordination to the Hindu majority. Instead, they claimed the status of a communal majority themselves in the provinces of the northeast and northwest by the late 1920s. The creation of Sind, Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier as distinct provinces in their own right would take the number of Muslim-majority provinces to five, counterbalanced against the seven Hindu-majority provinces of British India. Equally, proportional representation would perpetuate Muslim dominance within the provincial legislatures in Punjab and Bengal. Significantly, the Proposals also abandoned the principle of ‘weightage’, which had been created by the British in 1909 to acknowledge the community’s political influence and as compensation for their demographic status.³² Weightage had previously served to

³¹ Mushirul Hasan, ‘The Delhi Proposals: A Study in Communal Politics’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 17.4 (1980), 381-396.

³² David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1982]), pp. 144-150.

particularly enhance Muslim representation in the councils and legislatures of Muslim-minority provinces. Its proposed abolition, then, was part of a broader shift towards acknowledging the significance of territorial claims on the basis of their majority status as a means to better secure Muslim representation. Although ultimately rejected by the authors of the Nehru Report, who also raised concerns about the devolution of power to the provinces, elements of the proposals did find their way into the new Government of India Act of 1935. Under its instruction, the new Muslim-majority province of Sind was separated from Bombay Presidency on 1 April 1936, despite protestations from both Hindu nationalist parties and local Sindhi-speaking Hindus.

The Making of a Maratha Majority

The decision to separate Sind makes it clear that number was being territorialised in the apparent democratic interests of different religious communities under the new constitutional arrangements.³³ However, the decision to separate Sind was always just one illustration of a broader discussion about the wholesale reorganisation of provincial administrative boundaries both within Bombay and elsewhere in India, which was capable of taking into consideration caste and linguistic demographics, too. This was most palpably evident in the decision to simultaneously bifurcate the province of Bihar and Orissa on linguistic lines under the 1935 Government of India Act.³⁴ But it was also apparent in the same period in the demand for the creation of

³³ Cf. Appadurai's work on the synergies between an earlier form of cadastral surveying and the developing practice of human enumeration in nineteenth-century colonial India. Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. by C. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 314-339 (pp. 321-326).

³⁴ New Delhi, National Archives of India [henceforth NAI], Government of India [henceforth GOI], Reforms Office File 47/33 R, 'Constitution of Orissa Administrative Committee', 24 June 1933; *Ibid.*, Reforms Office File 1/36 G (B), 'Constitution of Orissa Order 1936'.

Samyukta Karnatak in western India, which would bring together Kannada-speaking communities residing in the provinces of Bombay and Madras, as well as the princely states of Hyderabad and Mysore. Proponents of a unitary Kannada-speaking province had petitioned the British Raj for a new province where Kannada speakers would constitute the majority of the population since the constitutional negotiations of the late 1920s. However, they remained unsuccessful in their demands until the wholesale reorganisation of provincial administrative boundaries in southern and western India under the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission in 1956. Throughout this thirty-year period, they engaged with a nascent democracy as a form of majoritarian rule, in which reorganisation would be linked to protecting the interests of the majority community within the new province. As much was apparent in a letter from H.S. Kaujalgi to the *Bombay Chronicle* anticipating the Karnatak Unification Conference in November 1936, during which he argued that, at present,

In Karnatak we have to keep the non-Kannada groups satisfied even at the sacrifice of our rights and principles. Some of them claim rights and privileges which they would never dream of conceding to the Kannada people in their own non-Kannada provinces. This successful tyranny of the minorities ... will have to be extirpated for the good of the province as well as the whole nation.³⁵

The majority status of Kannada speakers within these districts was here juxtaposed to the minority status of non-Kannada groups, particularly Marathi and Telugu speakers. As the letter to the *Bombay Chronicle* therefore suggests, Muslim politicians and intellectuals were not the only community who strived to replace erstwhile

³⁵ 'The Unification of Karnatak: A Moral Necessity: By H.S. Kaujalgi', *Bombay Chronicle* (Bombay), 22 October 1936.

commensurative practices as separate electorates and bureaucratic reservations. Such practices, constructed around the separate political representation of both demographic minorities and socially disadvantaged groups, were to be superseded in the democratic imagination of certain caste and linguistic groups in southern and western India by a majoritarian democratic logic linked to the axiom of ‘one man, one vote’. For those reimagining the provinces, such as the proponents of Samyukta Karnatak, the practical manifestation of universal suffrage actually prefigured the political dominance of a Kannada-speaking majority within this new territorial unit. For these groups, support for a new Kannada-speaking province would mean it was no longer necessary to draw upon their minority status in a larger, composite Bombay Province, as they would become a majority in the new province. At the same time, the redrawing of boundaries would inevitably create new provincial minorities, who would face hostility from the new majority, particularly if this new majority interpreted democracy at the provincial level as designed to work in their interests, as the above quote from Kaujalgi suggests.

Unlike the demand for Samyukta Karnatak, the desire for Samyukta Maharashtra was comparatively sluggish.³⁶ Although Marathi novelists, playwrights and filmmakers articulated the demand as early as the 1920s, it was not a conspicuous element of political sloganeering amongst Maharashtrian politicians until an impending independence during the early 1940s. Yet we can trace a similar pattern to that evident in the demands for Samyukta Karnatak and Muslim majority provinces as espoused by representatives of the Maratha caste of western India over the same period. Focusing on caste in the context of demands for linguistic reorganisation

³⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the emergence of Maratha majoritarianism during the interwar period, see Oliver Godsmark, *Citizenship, Community and Democracy in India: From Bombay to Maharashtra, c. 1930-1960* (London: Routledge, 2018), Chapter Two.

might seem counterintuitive, yet demands for new provinces in southern and western India (and more recently in the context of the creation Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand in the north³⁷) frequently came to be premised on politicised caste identities. In fact, the supposed homogeneity of particular districts in Bombay, and the later provinces of Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra that in part emerged out of them, was not only premised on language, but was also reflected in terms of caste. Whilst the Maratha-Kunbi cluster made up the majority caste community of rural Maharashtra in central Bombay, the Patidar-Kanbi caste cluster predominated in the northern Gujarati-speaking districts of Bombay, and the Lingayat caste was the largest in Kannada-speaking southern districts. In Maharashtra, maybe as an outcome of its comparative lack of linguistic and religious diversity, conflicts between social groups were principally organised on the basis of caste, and in particular, to counter the Brahman's social and political dominance. These criticisms of caste hierarchy and Brahmanism date back to the *bhakti* movements of medieval Maharashtra.³⁸ However, it was under Jotirao Phule (1827-1890), a British educated low caste social reformer, that it came to be related to demographics. Phule coined the term *bahujan samaj* ('people in the majority'), a term that not only shaped the shifting politics of non-Brahmanism in late colonial Maharashtra but also highlighted 'the overrepresentation of the Brahmin minority in educational and bureaucratic contexts'.³⁹ Phule preferred this term to the more ambiguous 'Maratha', which could be understood to refer to: all Marathi speakers; all Marathi-speaking non-Brahmans; Kshatriya families with

³⁷ Louise Tillin, 'Caste, Territory and Federalism', *Seminar*, 633 (2012).

³⁸ Anne Feldhaus, *The Religious System of the Mahanabhava Sect: The Mahanabhava Sutrapatha* (New Delhi: Romesh Jain, 1983), pp. 57-68.

³⁹ Rao, *The Caste Question*, p. 13; see also Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873 to 1930* (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976).

‘princely blood’; or an amorphous agricultural caste cluster incorporating the Marathas and Kunbis. As a member of the low-caste Mali (gardener) community, Phule was concerned about latent schisms within the non-Brahman movement between other lower castes and the Maratha-Kunbis if the term ‘Maratha’ was employed.

After Phule’s death, Shahu II, the Maharaja of Kolhapur (r. 1894-1922), became the preeminent leader of the non-Brahman movement. Shahu showed less concern about employing such terminology, and by the start of the interwar era, was protesting the decision not to award separate representation to his Maratha caste fellows in British India under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. In a note to the Government of India in April 1920, he drew upon evidence of Maratha military participation in the Great War to complain, ‘We have fought for our Empire and Emperor even better than the Sikhs and the Mahomedans ... Still the Sikhs and Mohamedans are given separate electorates which are denied to the Mahrattas’.⁴⁰ Shahu and other Maratha representatives, particularly as they coalesced around elite interests in a new Non-Brahman Party, believed separate representation was necessary to counter the dominance of Brahmans within the legislature and bureaucracy within Bombay.

During the nineteenth century, Brahman ascendancy had existed behind a smokescreen of British liberalism – seemingly providing equal access to education, whilst widening opportunities for administrative and political power amongst previously marginalised social groups, in reality British rule had created prospects primarily for those who could already read and write. The Bombay Government’s

⁴⁰ NAI, GOI, Reforms Office File 130-148(b), ‘Private. Note by His Highness the Maharaja of Kolhapur on the necessity of separate Communal Electorates for the Mahrattas, etc., for electing members to the new Councils under the Reforms Scheme’, n.d.

implicit stress on a Brahmanic Hinduism, coupled with '[t]he old association of the higher castes with the skills of literacy[,] gave them a much greater flexibility and readiness to exploit these new possibilities than was possessed of any of western India's agricultural or urban lower castes'.⁴¹ In 1884, for example, out of 109 students in the Deccan College at Poona, 107 were Brahmans, despite the fact that they constituted only four per cent of the population in the region.⁴² Similar statistics reflected the composition of the provincial administrative services. In 1887 the Public Services Commission found that 41.25 per cent of the deputy collectors, 75.5 per cent of the mamlatdars (administrative heads of sub-districts) and 70 out of 104 subordinate judges were Brahmans in the Bombay Presidency.⁴³ However, by the early twentieth century, the prominence of Brahmans within Bombay's administrative and educative apparatus had declined dramatically.

Despite the ascendancy of Brahmans within nineteenth-century colonial Bombay, liberal forms and democratic language had encouraged the questioning of the continuation of such dominance amongst non-Brahman community leaders. We can place Shahu's petition to the Government of India in this context. His petition failed to spark a shift in the official mind-set regarding separate electorates for Marathas. But it did lead to those responsible for the 1919 reforms creating seven reserved seats for a novel category of 'Marathas and Allied Castes' within the 'General' (i.e. Hindu) electorate in the Bombay provincial legislature. The reservations were justified not only as a consequence of the historic underrepresentation of Marathas at the hands of the Brahmans, but significantly, also

⁴¹ O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, p. 7.

⁴² Ravinder Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century: A Study in the Social History of Maharashtra* (London: Routledge and Kenan Paul, 1968), p. 283.

⁴³ Quoted in Ian Copland, 'The Maharaja of Kolhapur and the Non-Brahmin Movement, 1902-1910', *Modern Asian Studies*, 7.2 (1973), 209-225 (p. 214).

on the basis of their ‘numbers and importance’.⁴⁴ During the 1920s, then, Marathas rapidly replaced Brahmans within district local boards, and increasingly employed these positions of authority to exert influence over civil service appointments, both within the bureaucracy and in education.⁴⁵ In February 1925, the Collector of Satara revealed that elections to the local board in Khanapur *taluka* (sub-district) had resulted ‘in a complete victory for the non-Brahmans who secured all the seats. Elated by their success they were carried beyond the bounds of discretion and commenced a campaign of abuse against the Brahmins, especially against the local officials’.⁴⁶ When some Brahman officers reacted to the insults, the Collector felt compelled to relocate the wayward administrators. The growing political clout of this community was not necessarily always a direct consequence of these rather limited reservations, but was instead frequently linked to the emergence of a Maratha demographic majority in the context of their gradual enfranchisement since the 1919 reforms. It was in this context that the continuation of reserved seats for the Marathas and ‘Allied Castes’ was contemplated and considered by Maratha representatives ahead of the next round of constitution making in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Interestingly, leading Maratha politicians expressed ambivalence when consulted about the continuation of reserved seats. This paralleled the aforementioned willingness of Jinnah and some other members of the League to give up separate electorates in the context of the Delhi Muslim Proposals. For example, Maratha

⁴⁴ The Reforms Committee (Franchise), *Evidence taken before the Reforms Committee (Franchise), Volume II: Bengal, Madras, Bombay* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919), p. 683; see also, NAI, GOI, Reforms Office File 130-148(b), ‘Demi-official letter from the Hon’ble Mr. C.N. Seddon, Reforms Commissioner, Bombay, to S.P. O’Donnell, Esq., C.I.E., Secretary to the GOI, Reforms Department’, 23 March 1920; Mumbai, Maharashtra State Archives [henceforth MSA], Government of Bombay [henceforth GOB], Reforms Office File 42 I, ‘Sir John Heaton’s Award’, 28 April 1920.

⁴⁵ MSA, GOB, Home (Special) Department File 363(5), ‘Letter from Commissioner, Central Division, to Secretary to Government, Home Department’, 28 December 1927.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, File 363(3), ‘Letter from the Collector of Satara to the Secretary to the Government, Home Department’, “Special Report on Affairs at Vita”, 5 September 1925.

representatives at the Bombay Provincial Non-Brahman Conference in May 1931 were prepared to support a resolution which read, 'The Marathas have sufficiently organised themselves and being larger in number as a group than any individual caste of the Allied Castes group, do not require any more this protection, nor do they ask for it for the future'.⁴⁷ As the resolution suggests, many Marathas had come to recognise that democratisation could be considered a portent for a form of majoritarianism within Marathi-speaking districts and electoral wards, where their sheer numbers made it most likely that Maratha representatives would be hired or elected. As a result, commensurative practices to equalise their status based upon their apparent 'backwardness' in comparison with the Brahman were increasingly deemed unnecessary. Rather, the Marathas could rely upon their demographic weight to secure power in the district. From this position, it was but a small step to demanding provincial reorganisation on linguistic lines, in which these forms of more localised Maratha majoritarianism could be extrapolated out and territorialised at the provincial level.

A Federal Moment?

It was the changed circumstances of the 1940s that brought many Maratha politicians towards advocating provincial reorganisation. Much like the idea of Pakistan, demands for reorganisation in western India were considered by their proponents as now all the more pressing, particularly in the period after the Cripps Mission of 1942, which had committed Britain to the realisation of full self-government for India after the war. In the context of an impending independence, it was believed that autonomous administrative spheres for different communities would best represent

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Reforms Office File 46/I, 'Resolutions of Fourth Session of the Bombay Provincial Non-Brahman Conference held at Shahabai (Kolaba District), 2 May 1931.

the true meaning of political freedom. It was in this context that Maratha politicians who had carved out political opportunities for themselves at the district level now looked to exert greater influence over new provincial spaces.⁴⁸ In December 1945, for example, we find the Maratha politician D.A. Surve contacting Lord Scarborough, the former Governor of Bombay Province, on the following pretext:

I am venturing to seek your help towards advancing the claim of the Marathas and the Marathi Speaking peoples for the creation of a Province for the people speaking the Marathi language ... It would be a political tragedy if the Marathas ... are thrown to the wolves as it were and reduced to the position of serfdom for all time ... I feel that the Marathas have a right to claim Your Lordship's moral and political support to help them attain a political position in the map of future India.⁴⁹

By this date, then, the demand for separate electorates for the Marathas articulated by the Maharaja of Kolhapur a quarter of a century earlier had been abandoned, to be replaced by the new demand for an autonomous Marathi-speaking province. As well as marking the shift from commensurative to majoritarian democratic logic, the demand for reorganisation was framed on the basis that not only Marathas, but also Marathi speakers, made up a majority of the inhabitants within this particular part of western India. References to linguistic demographics reflected a relative thawing of relations between Maharashtrian Brahmans and non-Brahmans during the 1930s, which meant that the Samyukta Maharashtra movement was capable of encompassing

⁴⁸ For more on the ways in which the proponents of Samyukta Maharashtra articulated their demands for provincial reorganization, see Godsmark, *Citizenship, Community and Democracy*, Chapter Three.

⁴⁹ London, British Library [henceforth BL], India Office Library [henceforth IOL], Lumley Collection, MSS.Eur.F.253/42, 'Letter from Rao Bahadur D.A. Surve to Lord Scarborough', 21 December 1945.

both groups. This détente was a consequence of a number of factors, including a shift within the provincial Congress away from principally representing the interests of urban Maharashtrian Brahmans, as well as attempts to position the party at an all-India level as a more representative and accountable organisation under Gandhi's leadership, capable of epitomising manifestations of regional sentiment.⁵⁰ As non-Brahmans (and particularly Marathas) increasingly joined the provincial Congress in this more relaxed and popular climate, a degree of consensus between Brahmans and Marathas over their regional identity emerged. This crystallised around the idea of the 'Marathi *manus*' (Marathi man), as 'the modern incarnation of the historical Maratha', a designation capable of encompassing both Maharashtrian Brahmans and non-Brahmans.⁵¹

One such Maharashtrian Brahman who became one of the most vocal supporters of the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra was the noted Indian economist Dhananjay Ramchandra Gadgil. In the summer of 1947, Gadgil published a short book entitled *The Federal Problem in India*. Contained within this tract were his musings on the proposals of the Cabinet Mission Plan, which had travelled to India the previous year to discuss and broker an agreement between the Congress and the League for the transfer of power. By the time the tract was published, the course of events in India had seemingly rendered Gadgil's ideas somewhat redundant. Between writing and publishing *The Federal Problem*, a decision had ultimately been reached to create two new separate and sovereign states out of British India, by as soon as

⁵⁰ For example, the decision to reorganise the Provincial/Pradesh Congress Committees on a linguistic basis at the Congress's annual conference at Nagpur in 1920, under Gandhi's influence. See, Mohandas K. Gandhi, 'The Congress Constitution', 3 November 1920, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (Electronic Book)* [henceforth CWMG], Volume 21 (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1999), p. 443.

⁵¹ Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 188.

August 1947. Despite this turn of events, Gadgil still hoped that his discussion of the Cabinet Mission's proposals 'may not be found entirely useless for an understanding of the continuing problems'.⁵² Instead, he made reference to some of the other issues contained within his book, which he still deemed worthy of careful consideration for India's future constitutional arrangements. 'The problem of ... the composition of federating units', Gadgil argued, 'now take the leading position'.⁵³

Within *The Federal Problem*, Gadgil had suggested that the existing provinces of British India had 'no special relevance for the federating process'.⁵⁴ Created according to the whims and exigencies of colonial administrators during the slow expansion and consolidation of British authority in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the current provincial units also skirted around 'a panoply of exceptions' to direct British rule (princely states, excluded and partially excluded areas, the territories of other European powers) and ultimately had no direct relevance to the wider public.⁵⁵ Gadgil argued that a new constitutional framework proposed by the Cabinet Mission, based around a federal scheme, provided a perfect opportunity through which to rethink the structure of the provinces, which would come to constitute independent India's federating units. To have any sense of purchase, Gadgil reasoned, these units needed to be created on the basis '... of regions, the peoples of which are conscious of separate identity, i.e., as distinct from their neighbours and are conscious of a feeling of unity among themselves'.⁵⁶ In the context of the Cabinet

⁵² D.R. Gadgil, *The Federal Problem in India* (Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1947), p. vi.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁵ The phrase 'panoply of exceptions' is borrowed directly from Peter Robb, 'The Colonial State and Constructions of Indian Identity: An Example on the North-East Frontier in the 1880s', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31.2 (1997), 245-283.

⁵⁶ Gadgil, *The Federal Problem*, p. 67; for an earlier articulation of such arguments about the significance of 'vague moods and unvoiced feelings' in the context of interwar constitutionalism, see Kerala Putra, *The Working of Dyarchy in India, 1919-1928* (Bombay:

Mission's proposals, Gadgil adopted language and religion as the criteria around which the provinces within a federal India should be reorganised.

The majority status of Marathi speakers within what would become Maharashtra also had significant implications for Gadgil's understanding of an independent India's nascent democratic process. In another pamphlet, entitled *Federating India*, published slightly earlier in 1945, Gadgil had intimated that, 'if, in the administrative unit constituted, the language of the bulk of the people is not also the language of all administration', then democracy would be reduced to 'a farce'. Conversely, if linguistic reorganisation were to be incorporated within the framing of independent India's new constitution, Gadgil reasoned that this 'handicap to the bulk of the people' would be removed.⁵⁷ Accordingly, Gadgil believed that reorganisation provided security for standardised communities (caste, class, religion and other forms of difference amongst Marathi speakers were here elided) in their own semi-autonomous territorial entities, thereby privileging their particular claims and entitlements in a way that equated democratisation with a provincialized form of majority rule. As provided opportunities for particular communalised forms of majoritarian rule, the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra paralleled and overlapped with a similar understanding amongst some of its supporters of what Pakistan would entail, with ultimately significant consequences for minority communities residing in these spaces.

Drawing upon Frederick Cooper's work on decolonisation in French West Africa, we might also see Gadgil's musings on the Cabinet Mission proposals for an

Taraporevala, 1928), p. 8. Quoted in Stephen Legg, 'Dyarchy: Democracy, Autocracy, and the Scalar Sovereignty of Interwar India', *CSSAAME*, 36.1 (2016), p. 46.

⁵⁷ D.R. Gadgil, *Federating India* (Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1945), p. 14.

undivided India as part of a wider ‘federal moment’ in South Asia at this particular juncture, which captured the imaginations of European administrative personnel and a broad cross-section of educated Indian society.⁵⁸ By referring to this wider federal moment, I am not drawing a direct link to a longer history of federalism dating back to deliberations over the 1935 Government of India Act. Instead the focus here is on the broader ideas stimulated specifically in the context of the Cabinet Mission and its proposals, not just in relation to the demand for Pakistan, but encompassing ideas for federation and provincial reorganisation that took account of India’s social composition beyond the ‘Hindu-Muslim problem’. ‘It must be recognised’, argued Sir Frederick Burrows, the last British Governor of Bengal, writing in March 1946, ‘... that communal feelings, Provincial patriotism and, in their present set-up, the existence of the [Princely] States make anything but a rather loose federation, with the main functions of the administration located in the Provinces and States, impossible to contemplate’.⁵⁹ Like Gadgil, Burrows went on to argue ‘that there would have to be a very considerable alteration in Provincial boundaries if any such scheme were adopted ...’.⁶⁰ Sir Francis Wylie, Governor of the United Provinces, summed up the conundrum succinctly: ‘The Indian problem is not therefore merely a matter of finding an accommodation between the Hindus and the Muslims ... It involves, on the contrary, a reconstruction of the administrative fabric of the whole country to enable it to support the burden of independence’.⁶¹ Representatives of other Indian communities were also articulating similarly federal solutions in the context of their own political interests. Master Tara Singh, leader of the Akali Dal and considered to

⁵⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁵⁹ BL. India Office Records [henceforth IOR], L/PJ/10/36, ‘Note by Sir F. Burrows’, undated [c. March 1946].

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ‘Note by Sir F. Wylie’, undated [c. March 1946].

be representative of Sikh interests, for example, argued ‘for [a] united India’ in April 1946, with ‘some form of autonomous Sikh State’.⁶²

Certain iterations of the idea of Pakistan might also be included in this wider federal moment. Of course, if we accept that the demand for Pakistan was entirely premised on the idea of partitioning India into two separate and sovereign nation-states, we cannot suggest that the idea of Pakistan can be included within this moment. Writing in *Harijan* in July 1942, for example, Gandhi had differentiated between the demand for Pakistan and the demand for Andhra, a linguistic province for Telugu speakers in southern India:

There can be no comparison between Pakistan and Andhra separation. The Andhra separation is a redistribution on a linguistic basis. The Andhras do not claim to be a separate nation having nothing in common with the rest of India. Pakistan on the other hand is a demand for carving out of India a portion to be treated as a wholly independent sovereign State. Thus there seems to be nothing common between the two.⁶³

However, partition was not the only resolution to the Pakistan demand. Writing in his autobiography, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the leading Muslim representative within the Congress, claimed authorship of a federal solution to the Pakistan conundrum, which would ‘be so framed as to ensure complete autonomy to the provinces in as many subjects as possible’.⁶⁴ But Azad went further, reflecting that

⁶² *Ibid.*, IOR, L/PJ/5/337, ‘Meeting between Cabinet Delegation, Field Marshall Viscount Wavell and Representatives of the Sikh Community’, 5 April 1946.

⁶³ Gandhi, ‘Question Box’, *Harijan* (Sevagram), 3 July 1942, in *CWMG*, vol. 83, p. 78. Also quoted in Gandhi, *Linguistic Provinces*, ed. by Bharatan Kumarappa (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1954), p. 8; and Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina*, p. 21.

⁶⁴ Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1988 [1959]), p. 147.

I was also satisfied that even apart from communal considerations, this was the best political solution for a country like India. India is a vast country with a large population divided into more or less homogenous units which live in different provinces. It was necessary to assure to the provinces the largest possible measure of autonomy even on general considerations of constitutional propriety and practical administration.⁶⁵

According to Azad, it was the broad contours of his federal scheme that were eventually taken up and incorporated within the Cabinet Mission proposals, with the approval of Gandhi and the Congress. Azad claims only Vallabhbhai Patel objected to the scheme at the time, as he disliked the fact that ‘certain subjects like currency and finance’ would not ‘belong to the Central sphere’.⁶⁶ Equally, Jinnah himself accepted the Cabinet Mission proposals for a three-tiered formula based upon a confederal solution, and the Muslim League Council voted unanimously in its favour. This other possibility for Pakistan was part of a wider federal solution to the thorny issue of Indian independence that was imagined at this juncture, but which was not ultimately realised.

Gandhi’s claim that the Andhras (and by association other linguistic groups demanding provincial reorganisation) did not constitute a ‘separate nation’ was also contested by some of his contemporaries. We have already briefly noted how Jinnah and the Muslim League claimed the status of a nation for India’s Muslims, as a means to overcome their erstwhile position as a communal minority. But supporters of the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra were also articulating a similar claim to nationhood during this same period in the context of the Cabinet Mission’s proposals.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 149. See also p. 156.

Both claims to nationhood were not necessarily ultimatums for independent sovereignty, but could also be potentially considered as strategies through which to carve out autonomous spheres of influence within an imagined Indian union.⁶⁷ In *Federating India*, Gadgil argued that whilst religion formed the basis for the future territorial demarcation of such autonomous spheres within northern India, the south ‘consists of fairly well marked separate national groups who can easily be distinguished by their common language’.⁶⁸ Claiming the status of a nation here supported the articulation of an emotional attachment and supposedly *a priori* claim to a particular patch of territory within India, rather than displacing a wider sense of ‘Indianness’.⁶⁹ And this was frequently organised in juxtaposition to other communities residing within that territory or the wider Indian union. To illustrate this point, we can turn to another (albeit more ambivalent) supporter of the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra, the Dalit lawyer and politician B.R. Ambedkar, who made the following contentious comments in the context of his treatise on the Pakistan demand:

Are the Musalmans alone opposed to the existence of a Central Government? What about the Hindus? ... The Hindu Provinces are by no means a happy family. It cannot be pretended that the Sikhs have any tenderness for the Bengalees or the Rajputs or the Madrasis ... As to the Mahratta, who does not recall that the Mahrattas, who set out to destroy the Muslim Empire in India, became a menace to the rest of the Hindus

⁶⁷ Arguments over whether this was or was not the case with regards to the Pakistan demand remain contentious. For the aforementioned argument about the possibility of the Pakistan demand being just such a strategy, see Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*. For a range of different kinds of critiques of Jalal’s position, see Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity*; Jaffrelot, *The Pakistan Paradox*; and Devji, *Muslim Zion*.

⁶⁸ Gadgil, *Federating India*, p. 13.

⁶⁹ Cf. Véronique Bénéï, *Schooling Passions: Nation, History, and Language in Contemporary Western India* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 80, 136, 166.

whom they harassed and kept under their yoke for nearly a century. The Hindu Provinces have no common traditions and no interests to bind them.⁷⁰

As one of the most eminent theoreticians on both Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra, Ambedkar saw both demands as being premised around the emergence of distinct nationalities. He also argued that ‘[t]he use of the term “Constituent Units” [in the Lahore Resolution] indicates that what is contemplated [in the Pakistan demand] is a Federation’. And he supported both the claims to Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra on the basis that ‘they [i.e. Muslims in Pakistan and Marathi speakers in Maharashtra] should be allowed the freedom to grow to their fullest in nationhood’.⁷¹ By bringing together the demands in this way, we are able to gain a more all-encompassing perspective on the Pakistan demand, as one paradigmatic example of a variety of ideas about post-independence India that were in contemporary circulation in the context of the Cabinet Mission.

Conclusion

This paper has gone beyond simply highlighting that demands for Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra were coeval to reflect on the nature of Muslims and Marathas/Marathi speakers engagement with democratic forms in the decades prior to their creation, noting the importance of territory, number and community to nascent democratic equations. The manner in which both shifted away from the politics of

⁷⁰ Ambedkar, *Pakistan, or the Partition of India*, pp. 12-13.

⁷¹ See Ambedkar, *Pakistan, or the Partition of India*, p. 22; Ambedkar, *Maharashtra as a Linguistic Province: Statement Submitted to the Linguistic Provinces Commission* (Bombay: Thacker and Company Limited, 1948), p. 3; for more on Ambedkar’s approach to Pakistan and Samyukta Maharashtra, see Oliver Godsmark, “‘*Civis Indianus Sum*’? Ambedkar on Democracy and Territory during Linguistic Reorganisation (and Partition)”, *MAS*, 53.6 (forthcoming, 2019).

commensuration and towards support for majoritarianism within autonomous spaces during the interwar years is indicative of the related processes that lay behind certain iterations of the two movements. Both demonstrate how conceptions of majority rule materialised alongside the introduction of democratic institutions at the provincial scale in interwar South Asia. These ideas were not only far removed from the non-discriminatory, secular democratic practices that were elaborated by Nehru and his followers at the central level of the Congress in the interwar period, but also diverged from the emphasis upon separate electorates and reserved seats that had preoccupied Muslim and Maratha communal politics in the first few decades of the twentieth century. That the ideas of certain thinkers who supported the demands were both firmly concentrated upon the relationship between demography, territory, and provincial autonomy is also indicative of the ways in which certain understandings of the Pakistan demand might be perceived as one part of a broader move towards finding a federal solution for India's social pluralism at the moment of colonial/postcolonial transition.

In exploring these themes, this paper has therefore looked to contribute towards a wider reappraisal of the demand for Pakistan in both a spatial and temporal sense. By seeing certain elements of the call for Pakistan and the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra as emerging out of related processes by the 1940s and in the context of the transition to independence, this paper has also provided a novel space through which to analyse the Pakistan demand, providing a shift from the literature that still too often tends to treat it as a standalone event. By thinking about the Pakistan demand alongside the demand for Samyukta Maharashtra in the context of the Cabinet Mission proposals, we are able to gain a glimpse of the contingency and complexity of the proposals to rectify the constitutional problem that had emerged at

this juncture. A broader pattern of demands for regional autonomy and federalism, as articulated by such Indian luminaries as Azad and Gadgil at least temporarily prevailed, before the events of partition that ultimately led to two separate sovereign nation-states being created.