

THEODORE P. WRIGHT, JR.

Strategies for the Survival of Formerly Dominant Languages

THE declining status of Urdu in North India since Partition in 1947¹ is not unique, for it is only one of a number of languages of formerly dominant “élites”² which have lost their power through the overthrow of multi-ethnic dynastic states and/or the dissolution of colonial regimes. I shall analyze a dozen cases for comparison with Urdu: six which have declined or died out (Manchu in China, Coptic in Egypt, Gaelic and Latin in the British Isles, Quechua in Peru, Arabic in Spain, and German in Eastern Europe) and six which have not only survived but flourished and even dominated in the post-imperial eras (Anglo-Saxon over Norman French, Spanish and Portuguese over Amerindian languages, Afrikaans in South Africa and French in Canada achieving bilingual status with English, Hebrew over Yiddish and Arabic in Palestine/Israel and Catalan in Spain). In general, those have survived or even flourished which were brought by large-scale colonization and/or religious conversion and were not just the languages of a conquering military élite. For instance, Urdu is both the official language and the lingua franca of Pakistan (and Kash-

¹Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), Ch. 4, “Urdu and Muslim Grievances in North India, 1947-71,” pp. 182-217; M.N. Venkatachaliah, “Language and Politics: Status of Urdu in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 26 June 1999, pp. 1659-60.

²Employing “élite” in the sense of R.A. Schermerhorn’s fourfold paradigm by size and power of “dominant majority” (power and size), “élite” (power but not size), “mass subjects” (size but not power) and “minority” (neither power nor size). *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 13.

mir), where many Arabs, Persians, Afghans and Turks settled and a majority of the preexisting population was converted to Islam, but not in North India and Bangladesh where, in the former area, the majority of Hindus failed to be converted to Islam, and in the latter, a majority accepted Islam but not the Urdu language which remained an élite medium until 1971.³

Clearly, the varying characteristics of these cases affect the outcomes and the lessons to be drawn for the survival of Urdu.

First let us consider the question of whether the formerly dominant language is itself indigenous or alien. One would think in an age of nationalism that an indigenously based speech would have a better claim for toleration than a foreign one. Urdu, unlike Manchu, was not the mother tongue of the Turco-Mongol invaders of North India who founded the Delhi Sultanate, but grammatically a compromise with Brijbhasha, Hindavi or Hindustani, the Indo-European vernacular of the conquered Hindu “mass subjects” but written in the exogenous Arabo-Persian script and with an infusion of vocabulary from Arabic and Persian.⁴ Spoken Urdu and Hindi are, I understand from Dr. Khalidi, mutually intelligible even though the written forms are not.⁵ Can it be

³On the failure to convert all Hindus in Hindustan, perhaps for fear of losing the proceeds of the *jizya*, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the 13th Century* (Bombay: Asia Publishing, 1961), pp. 312–25. On the élite minority character of Urdu in Bengal, see Rounaq Jehan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 13, 37.

⁴Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture* (Bombay: Asia Publishing, 1959), Ch. 4, “The Origin and Growth of the Urdu Language.” For the split between Hindi and Urdu in the nineteenth century, see Jyotindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970). Muzaffar Alam reminds us in “The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32.2 (1998), pp. 317–49 that Persian displaced Hindavi as the language of administration and poetry from Akbar to Macauley.

⁵Ather Farouqui, “Future Prospects of Urdu in India,” *Mainstream*, Annual 1992, p. 103. But Omar Khalidi argues that retention of the Urdu script is crucial for preservation of the Indian Muslim religious and cultural heritage by analogy with what happened in Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Central Asia with the switch to Latin and Cyrillic script respectively in the 1920s and 1930s. “Urdu Language

that it is the script rather than the vocabulary which has been the real stumbling block to its acceptance?

In this respect, the invader's switch to Urdu resembles the eventual victory of Middle English over the Norman French of William the Conqueror (1066).⁶ The Norsemen who had invaded France a century and a half before (911 C.E.) had quickly accepted French in the course of Christianization in place of their own unwritten Germanic language. Over a much longer period ruling England (1066–1415) they switched again to their Anglo-Saxon subjects' tongue, but with an infusion of French vocabulary. The usual explanations for this anomaly are: too few Normans, too much intermarriage, and the necessity of the rulers to communicate with their subordinates. It must be remembered that, unlike North India, both rulers and ruled were Catholic Christians.

By contrast, the dominant Arabic rulers' language of Moorish Spain (711–1492 C.E.) never melded with the Romance tongue of their Christian subjects, nor were the bulk of the latter converted to Islam.⁷ Arabic in Spain, although more cultured than the Spanish of the time, did not survive the "reconquista" and the final loss of Muslim political hegemony with the fall of Granada in 1492. Those Muslims who would not convert were expelled. The enforced conversion of the rest to Christianity and the strict prohibition by the Catholic Inquisition of not only the practice of Islam, but the very speaking of Arabic did not save these "Moriscos" from expulsion in 1609.⁸ A few Arabic words in the Spanish vocabulary are all that remains. Indian Muslims, especially in Hyderabad, are well aware of the dangerous precedent that this loss of "Andalus" to Islam⁹ represents for Urdu.

A surprising contrary case to the victory of the Anglo-Saxon subjects' language in Norman England and of Hindustani-Urdu over Turkish in

and the Future of Muslim Identity in India," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* VII.2 (July 1986), pp. 395–403.

⁶N.F. Blake, *A History of the English Language* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

⁷Anwar G. Chejne, *Islam and the West: The Moriscos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 43.

⁸Henry Charles Lea, *The Moriscos of Spain: Their Conversion and Expulsion* (New York: Greenwood, 1968).

⁹Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), pp. 158–71.

North India is the failure of the Gaelic revival in Ireland despite all manner of support and subsidy by the Irish government after independence from Great Britain in 1921.¹⁰ Two and a half centuries of severe sanctions against both the Gaelic language and the Roman Catholic Church of the Irish majority by the British Protestant “ascendancy” so weakened the former but not the latter that the Census of 1911 revealed that only a rapidly declining 18% of Irish knew the historic mother tongue and even fewer were “monolingual” in it. Colonization by Presbyterian Scots in the North produced an English-speaking Protestant majority there which led to the partition of Ireland at independence in 1921, much like British India a generation later. Gaelic had come to be so much associated in peoples’ minds with poverty, illiteracy and rural backwardness that no amount of effort by the turn-of-the-century Irish nationalist movement among intellectuals could reverse the tide. Here, as in Scotland and Wales, the conquered perforce adopted the language of the conquerors, but not their ethnic identity. Lowland Scotland had long been infiltrated by English, so the union of the two countries in 1707 appeared voluntary.

Coptic, the language of ancient Egypt, was overlain with Greek under Macedonian (323–30 B.C.E.) and Roman rule (30 B.C.E.–640 C.E.) but continued to be the language of the masses until the Arab conquest. Thereafter it was gradually displaced even for the Christian minority by Arabic until it was reduced to a ritual language of the Coptic Christian Church, like Latin was in the Catholic Church until Vatican II (1962).¹¹

An example of the quick decline of a former ruling élite’s language is Manchu, the mother tongue of the alien Ching Dynasty of the Chinese Empire (1644–1912) and its “bannermen” or garrisons. As soon as the First Chinese Revolution overthrew the empire and turned China into a republic, the élite and privileged Manchu warriors, lacking other skills than military, rapidly descended into poverty (typically rickshaw pullers) and often “passed” for Han Chinese with Chinese surnames to escape

¹⁰W.B. Lockwood, *Languages of the British Isles Past and Present* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1975), “Irish Celtic,” pp. 76–9; Iarfhlaith Watson, “The Irish Language and Television: National Identity, Preservation, Restoration and Minority Rights,” *British Journal of Sociology* 47.2 (June 1996), pp. 255–73.

¹¹Edward Wakin, *A Lonely Minority: The Modern Story of Egypt’s Copts* (New York: Morrow & Co., 1963).

discrimination.¹² One thinks here of the fate of the Urdu-speaking service class in Hyderabad.¹³ The Kuomintang or Nationalist government of China (1927–49) followed an openly assimilationist policy towards its linguistic minorities. Even in Manchuria, their homeland in the northeast of China, the indigenous Manchus were swamped by Han Chinese immigration in the 1920s. The subsequent Japanese attempt to create a puppet “empire” of Manchukuo (1922–45) under the nominal rule of the last Manchu dynasty child emperor, Puyi, failed to reestablish the Manchu language. The Communist regime of China, which won control of the mainland including Manchuria by 1950, has had an intermittently more benign stance towards the 7% non-Han minorities in the whole People’s Republic including protection of the languages and cultures of these scattered and peripheral people, somewhat like India’s regarding the Scheduled Tribes.¹⁴ This sometimes enforced policy produced, by the 1980s, a sharp increase in the number of declared Manchu speakers as some of the assimilated ones “emerged from the closet” and declared their Manchu origins. This process is somewhat akin to the strong revival of Native American ethnicity, if not language, in the United States since the 1960s because of affirmative action, although the eventual outcome in both cases from sheer lack of numbers and heavy rates of intermarriage looks dismal for language survival.¹⁵ The cultural and numerical inferiority of the Manchus to their Chinese subjects doomed their language.

A European example of this principle of military supremacy but cultural inferiority was the inability of German to withstand Latin in the aftermath of the Roman Empire. When the German barbarians overran the Roman frontier in the fifth century (C.E.) and established tribal kingdoms in former Roman provinces with Latin-speaking populations (the Franks in France, Visigoths in Spain, Lombards in Italy, Anglo-Saxons in

¹²Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), Ch. 7, “The Manchus in the Twentieth Century,” pp. 189–201; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors, Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 215–28.

¹³Omar Khalidi, *Indian Muslims Since Independence* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1995), “Muslims in the Tertiary Sector,” pp. 74–7.

¹⁴June Teufel Dreyer, “Language Planning for Ethnic Minorities in the People’s Republic of China,” paper delivered at the International Studies Association, February 23, 1978.

¹⁵Joshua A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 1991), “The Current State of Navajo,” pp. 188–90.

Britain), the Germanic languages quickly succumbed to the Latin-origin Romance languages, French, Spanish and Italian, except in Britain where the basically Celtic population may have been overwhelmed by the invasion and mass settlement of Saxons, Danes and Norwegians or pushed back to the “Celtic Periphery” of the British Isles (Wales, Scotland and Ireland).¹⁶ Even there, as we have seen, English eventually triumphed. On the continent, but outside the Roman borders, various German dialects were retained. In Eastern Europe, because of the *drang nach osten* of Germans and the expansion of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires into Slavic lands, German became the élite language until the collapse of those empires after the First World War and the expulsion of the German minorities after the Second World War.¹⁷

A second group of cases concerns the fate of the European colonial languages after the breakup of overseas colonial rule following World War II. For people in the European channel of history, there was the ominous precedent of the disappearance of the Greek language from Greek colonies in the Mediterranean basin.¹⁸ Of the latter-day colonial languages, English has fared the best because of the economic hegemony first of Great Britain and then of the United States and the existence of the largely English-settled and therefore English-speaking dominions: Canada, Australia and New Zealand.¹⁹ In all three, the European settlers rapidly outnumbered the primitive native populations. South Africa portends a more doubtful future for English because of competition with Afrikaans and the dozen or so numerically preponderant Bantu lan-

¹⁶Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

¹⁷Peter Schneider, “Is Anyone German Here? A Journey Into Silesia,” *New York Times* 15 April 1990, Section VI, pp. 28ff.

¹⁸V.L. Menage, “The Islamization of Anatolia,” and Peter Hardy, “Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia ...” *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), pp. 52–99.

¹⁹Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, illustrates the near hopeless task of preserving the languages of dispersed, hunter-gatherer tribes in competition with technologically advanced European settlers in Australia (Ch. 9, “Prospects for Reversing Language Shift in Australia: Evidence From Its Aboriginal and Immigrant Languages”) and New Zealand (Ch. 8, “Maori: The Native Language of New Zealand”).

guages.²⁰ Even in India where English is the mother tongue of only a tiny residue of Anglo-Indians, Christians, and some Christian-educated élite,²¹ it long ago joined Urdu as a lingua franca and replaced it as the medium of international communication for the extremely heterogeneous populations of India and Pakistan.²²

Latin America, whose Creoles threw off the rule of Spain and Portugal by the 1820s, has retained Spanish (and Portuguese in Brazil) as the official and increasingly the actual language of the bulk of the population.²³ Despite some symbolic deference to Amerindian culture in Mexico and Peru, one of the main indicators of “mestizoization” of the large native populations is their adoption of Spanish.²⁴

Clearly, in Latin America a distinctive language is not a requisite of nationality. Even in the United States, Spanish speakers who were greatly reduced in numbers in Florida and the Southwest after the American annexations of 1819 and 1848 respectively, may now be witnessing a peaceable “reconquista”²⁵ through the massive legal and illegal immigration from Mexico, Cuba and Central America. (Puerto Rico, the source of the huge Hispanic immigration to New York since the 1950s, has been a U.S. possession since 1898.) The United States has seen a sudden shift from a policy of coerced cultural and linguistic assimilation to one of

²⁰Theodore P. Wright, Jr. and Theodore P. Venter, “Identity and Rights of Former Ruling Élite Minorities: North Indian Muslims and White Afrikaners of South Africa,” paper delivered at the conference on “Nationalism, Identity, Minority Rights,” Bristol, UK, September 16–19, 1999.

²¹R.A. Schermerhorn, *Ethnic Plurality in India* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona, 1978), Ch. 9, “Anglo-Indians,” p. 212 cites only 223,781 Indians in the 1961 Census with English as mother tongue.

²²Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), pp. 120, 307; Jamil Jalibi, *Pakistan: The Identity of Culture* (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1984), Ch. 8, “A Common Culture and a Common Language,” pp. 174–7.

²³Philip Mason, *Patterns of Dominance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), Ch. 11, “Spanish America,” p. 245.

²⁴Francois Bourricaud, “Indian, Mestizo and Cholo as Symbols in the Peruvian System of Stratification,” *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, eds. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 350–87.

²⁵James Fallows, “Immigration: How It’s Affecting Us,” *Atlantic Monthly* November 1983, pp. 45–106.

“multiculturalism” and bilingual education since 1965,²⁶ but there is some evidence that despite ease of travel to the homelands and compulsory bilingual education, the second generation of Hispanics (“Latinos”), like the European immigrants of 1880–1920, is shifting to the dominant English for the sake of jobs and careers in mainstream American society.²⁷

French has not fared so well as English and Spanish, remaining the official language of a tiny élite in a large number of impoverished former colonies in Africa and Haiti, but rapidly disappearing from Vietnam. The French colonists (“pied-noirs”) of Algeria fled or were expelled in 1964 after a long and bloody war of independence.²⁸ The Islamic revival and civil war of the 1970s and 1980s is interpreted by some as a protest against the still dominant Francophone native élite.²⁹ Only in Canada, where there was a substantial population of French-speaking colonists before the British conquest of Canada from France in 1763, has the language enough of a geographically compact mass base for survival. The Quebec Act of 1774 wisely guaranteed the subject French their language, law, and Catholic Church. While continuing immigration of British, American and other non-Francophones has reduced French speakers to a 28% minority of the country’s population, the Dominion of Canada has become officially bilingual.³⁰ Despite this concession by the Anglophone majority, a serious secessionist movement and Parti Québécois developed in the second half of the 20th century which has nearly won two referenda on independence.

²⁶Diane Ravitch, “Politicization and the Schools: The Case of Bilingual Education,” *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Richard C. Monk (1985; Guilford, Conn.: Dushkin, 1994), pp. 126–44. Nathan Glazer, an early opponent of *Affirmative Discrimination* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), now admits *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

²⁷Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory, the Education of Richard Rodriguez* (Boston: Godine, 1982).

²⁸David Gordon, *The Passing of French Algeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) reports that even after the exodus of the Pied-noirs, half the population were French speaking.

²⁹Abdel Hamid Mansouri, “Algeria Between Tradition and Modernity: The Question of Language,” diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1991.

³⁰Kenneth McRoberts, “The Rise of Québécois Identity,” *The Mobilization of Collective Identity: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Jeffrey Ross and Ann Baker Cottrell (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 225–55.

The Dutch East Indies Company left behind in South Africa, unlike Indonesia, one isolated group of its own settlers, the Afrikaans-speaking Boers. Like the French of Canada and the Muslims of North India they were subjected by the British (twice, in 1815 and 1902). But in their case they were able, first by emigrating inland from the British Cape Province and then by retaining a majority of the enfranchised European population of the Union of South Africa (1910), to win back political control and make Afrikaans, if not the predominant tongue, meaningfully bilingual until the end of apartheid in 1994.³¹ Now Afrikaans is only one of eleven official languages and is losing ground again to English because of the latter's greater utility in international trade. Ironically, the best hope for the survival of Afrikaans lies in the so-called "Cape Colored," mulattos and former slaves of the Dutch, whose mother tongue is Afrikaans and whose religion is also Calvinist Christianity. The situation is analogous to that of the non-Ashraf descendants of Hindu converts in North India

³¹(1) "The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. (2) Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages. (3) The national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population ... but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages. (4) ... all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably. (5) A Pan South African Language Board ... must promote and create conditions for the development and use of: all official languages, the Khoi, Nama and San languages ... and all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including ... Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa." *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*, Chapter 1, Founding Provisions, pp. 6–7. Almost more difficult than language per se are demands for alternative symbols such as changes in place names, monuments, flag and anthem. Charles Malan, "Symbolic Unity: The Role of Cultural Symbols in Nation-Building," *Democratic Nation-Building in South Africa*, eds. Nic Rhodie and Ian Liebenberg (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1994), pp. 182–9.

who are now the main reservoir of Urdu speakers and Islamic fundamentalism.³²

The most recent example of an imperial language being put in jeopardy, at least on its geographical fringes and not overseas like the others, is Russian since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The independence of the border republics in the Baltic, Caucasus and Central Asia, has left large, formerly privileged Russian minorities outside the boundaries of the Russian state.³³ They are protected so far only by the need for their technological/managerial skills and by the continued use of Russian as a second language by the former Communist, now “nationalist” élites, particularly in Central Asia.³⁴

After this rather dismal recital of cases, mostly of language decline, what can be learned that is relevant for Urdu from these other cases of language survival and recovery? The distinguished American student of linguistics, Joshua Fishman, in his study, “Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages,”³⁵ explicates three “success stories”: Catalan in Spain, French in Canada, and modern Hebrew in Palestine/Israel. None of these are quite comparable to Urdu in North India (if not Pakistan): the first two in that they continued to be spoken by solid blocs of population which maintained a majority in their respective provinces throughout the period of discrimination by central governments and dominant ethnic élites; the third in that Jews had been expelled from Palestine nineteen hundred years before and even in the last previous era of rule during the Second Kingdom (161 B.C.E.–70 C.E.) the common language was Aramaic. Hebrew

³²Like Urdu in post-independence India, Afrikaans lacks a majority in any of the provinces of South Africa but has a 62% majority in the Western Cape if one includes the Afrikaans-speaking “Cape Colored.” Interview with P. Mulder in Potchefstroom, Nov. 1998. See also, Milton Esman, *Ethnic Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), Ch. 4, “South Africa: Multiple Cleavages,” pp. 75–110.

³³Steven Erlanger, “Baltic Identity: Russians Wonder If They Belong,” *New York Times* 22 November 1992.

³⁴Anara Tabyshaliev, *The Challenge of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1999), pp. 14–5, reports a declining use of Russian as the lingua franca in favor of English, partly because of a change from Cyrillic to Latin script for the Uzbek and Turkish languages of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, but Arabic script in Tajikistan.

³⁵Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, Ch. 10, pp. 287–336.

had already become restricted to ritual use³⁶ like Arabic among South Asian Muslims, whereas Urdu is still a spoken language, but not by a majority of the population in any state of India.

The story of how European Jews, motivated by Zionism in reaction to Christian anti-Semitism, resettled in Palestine under late Ottoman rule and then the British Mandate is, of course, treated in celebratory manner by Fishman, with almost no reference to the price paid by Palestinian Arabs since 1948. He does deplore the decline of Yiddish, the Germanic mother tongue of the Ashkenazim, not only in Eastern Europe because of the Holocaust but also in America and Israel, where it has been supplanted by Hebrew as a second language in the former and as an official language in the latter. Ritual Hebrew required an intense campaign of “vernacularization” to make it compatible with modern life, as does Urdu now.

The analogy with Urdu becomes problematic in that the Zionists, as we’ve seen the Muslim invaders of North India did, abandoned their mother tongue for an indigenous one, but written in a different script. As Hebrew and Arabic are both Semitic languages, though somewhat more different than Urdu and Hindi, in theory it ought to be easier to find common ground between the two pairs of languages than between Yiddish and Arabic and Turco-Mongol and Hindavi respectively. But politics and ideology stand in the way in both cases. The Zionist policy would be as if the Muhajirin, on fleeing to Pakistan in 1947, had substituted Arabic for Urdu and imposed it on the indigenous Muslims. As it was, their attempt to impose Urdu on the Muslim Bengalis started the dispute between the two “wings” of Pakistan which led to its further partition in 1971.³⁷ As for Urdu in India, what a shame that Gandhi’s and Nehru’s preference for Hindustani in two scripts as the national language of India lost by only one vote in the Indian Constituent Assembly.³⁸ Is there any

³⁶Jack Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue: Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).

³⁷But the Muhajirin to Pakistan were a much smaller proportion of the population in both wings than the overwhelming percentage of Jews who immigrated to Palestine both before and after the establishment of Israel.

³⁸Kerrin Ditmer, “The Hindi-Urdu Controversy and the Constituent Assembly,” *Indian Journal of Politics* VI.1 (January–June 1972), pp. 13–22, points out that the close vote was on the use of Hindi numerals; Nehru lost the vote for Hindustani in the Congress caucus by 63–62 in 1947.

possibility at all that Urduwallahs, in alliance with the Dravidian and other non-Hindi language parties, could some day get the Constitution amended to reverse that decision? Short of that fantasy, Fishman's recital of the Hebraization of Jews in Palestine *before* 1948 has important lessons for defenders of Urdu:

1. Revival and vernacularization of Hebrew was accomplished without the aid of the Turkish and then British authorities in Palestine. This underscores the advice of Ralph Russell, the British Urdu teacher, and the late Danial Latifi that Urdu must be saved self-reliantly by Urdu speakers out of their own resources.³⁹ The early Jewish settlers (aliyah) in Palestine did not have the huge financial resources that the state of Israel has enjoyed since World War II to Hebraize the huge new immigration of Sephardic, Indian, Russian and Ethiopian Jews.⁴⁰

2. The task of "reversing language shift" requires a movement of devoted volunteers. How can this be accomplished in North India without bringing down on Muslim heads the charge by the Hindutvadis that they are "creating another Pakistan?" Fishman admits that the logical outcome of language revival is demands for autonomy or independence by either emigration or succession.⁴¹ Defenders of Urdu would have to emphasize the Indian nationalist roots of the movement (Gandhi and Nehru) and the benefits to all Indians of linguistic pluralism. Knowledge of Arabic script could be touted as an advantage for doing business in and with the Arab Middle East, especially the Gulf states,⁴² but more important is the translation of Urdu documents into Devanagari script so they

³⁹Ralph Russell, "Urdu in India Since Independence," *Economic and Political Weekly* 9 January 1999, pp. 44–8. See also, Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Indian State and Its Muslim Minority: From Dependency to Self-Reliance?" *India: Fifty Years of Democracy and Development*, eds. Yogendra K. Malik and Ashok Kapur (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corp., 1998), pp. 313–39.

⁴⁰Fishman and Fellman stress the intense ideological commitment of the early Zionists to the revival of Hebrew even at the expense of their own mother tongue, Yiddish.

⁴¹Presumably this would not be the case if it is a majority language, for instance Punjabi in Pakistan or Hindi in 19th century U.P., which is being revived against an alien, colonial language or a lingua franca, in which case, proponents are more likely to aspire to use state power to impose their own language on minorities.

⁴²However, the bulk of Indian workers in the Gulf states have come from the West Coast: Gujarat and Kerala. Saudi Arabia does prefer fellow Muslims.

can be read by young Muslims who have been taught Hindi in schools and do not know Arabic script.

3. Fishman repeatedly underscores in all the cases he discusses that what he calls RLS (reversing language shift) must be intergenerational and start with preschool children and the family. In his conclusion he offers a seven (actually nine) stage program for reversing language shift,⁴³ the number which are relevant in a given circumstance depending on the severity of the intergenerational dislocation:

(a) Reconstructing (vernacularizing) the language and adult acquisition of it (the former less relevant to Urdu, but the latter relevant to the script for those educated, if at all, in Devanagari).⁴⁴

(b) Cultural interaction in the language primarily involving the community-based older generation. Poetic *mushairas* are an example in North India. These attract sympathetic Hindus too.

(c) Intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood, the basis of mother tongue transmission. However, this implies ghettoization of Muslims which is taking place anyway, because of riots, but damages the possibility of building up contacts and favorable “cross-pressures” in the minds of the majority community.

(d) Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.

(e) Own schools instead of compulsory education, and substantially under own curricular and staffing control. (This was done by Catholics, at the time a very poor community, in 19th century America and largely taught by nuns.)⁴⁵

⁴³Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, p. 395.

⁴⁴Chejne, *Islam and the West*, p. 42 makes the case of the necessity of knowledge of the Arabic script for Muslims to have access to the fundamentals of Islam. The cost of not knowing Devanagari is stressed by Asghar Ali Engineer in “Language and Mobility: North Indian Muslim Perspective,” *Mainstream* 20 June 1995, pp. 15–7. An alternative proposal to transliterate Urdu into Roman script is Danial Latifi, “Language and Script: A New Proposal,” *The Monthly Statistical Commentary on Indian Economic Conditions* V.5 of the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (1963).

⁴⁵Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963), “The Irish: The Roman Catholic Church,” pp. 234–8, but the medium of instruction in these parochial schools, as in Ireland, was English. Jewish fulltime or one day only schools taught, and were often taught in, Yiddish or Hebrew.

(f) Public schools offering some instruction in Urdu, but under non-Muslim curricular and staff control. This, I understand, is a matter of enforcing existing law in some states.

(g) Use of Urdu in the local/regional (i.e., non-neighborhood) work sphere. (Practically non-existent in the United States for languages other than English, but growing in Quebec for French.)⁴⁶

(h) Use in local/regional mass media and governmental services. (I gather from Omar Khalidi's paper that this was largely lost by Urdu after 1947, but the riot against Urdu news broadcast in Bangalore shows there are some Urdu radio programs.)⁴⁷ I suspect that strategically more important for Indian Muslims is to have a quality English-language press like the new *Milli Gazette*.

(i) Education (medium of instruction), use in work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels. (Existed at the Osmania University before 1848, at *Jamia Millia* (?) and some other colleges, but with a majority of non-Muslim students if government aided.)

How can this even be started in North India when state schools are teaching through the medium of the dominant ethnicity's language, in this case Sanskritized Hindi, and from communally biased textbooks?⁴⁸ The Zionists, both in Eastern Europe and then in Palestine, developed their own primary and secondary schools. Indian Muslims have a myriad of *maktabs* but my understanding is that they teach the Qur'an by rote in Arabic, not Urdu.⁴⁹ Except for the Urdu-medium Anjuman schools in Mumbai, they are said to be of low quality and not to prepare students

⁴⁶The tables have been turned by Francophones winning political power and now it is the Anglophones of Quebec who claim their language is discriminated against. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, Ch. 6, "Canada-Quebec," pp. 147-75.

⁴⁷"Asghar Ali Engineer on Bangalore Disturbances, Oct. '94," *Muslim India* 145 (January 1995), p. 30.

⁴⁸Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph, "Rethinking Secularism: Genesis and Implication of the Textbook Controversy, 1977-79," *Cultural Policy in India*, ed. Lloyd Rudolph (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1984), pp. 13-41.

⁴⁹Mohammad Akhlaq Ahmad, *Traditional Education Among Muslims* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing, 1985); Kuldip Kaur, *Madrassa Education in India* (Chandigarh: Centre for Research in Rural & Industrial Development, 1990), Ch. 10, "Survey of Madrasas and Maktabs," pp. 251-76.

for competing in the mainstream economy.⁵⁰ Alternatively, the Jewish practice in the United States has been to send their children to the state schools, taught in English, but to set up their own schools for after school or weekend instruction, often attached to synagogues, to teach Hebrew and counteract Christian bias.⁵¹ These were taught in the early part of the last century in Yiddish, but, except for the ultra-orthodox Hasidim, increasingly in Hebrew. Some Yiddish has infiltrated the American popular culture through the world of entertainment, including the cinema in which Jews are disproportionately represented as Muslims are in the Indian cinema.⁵² The Nawabi culture and music of Lucknow, even if dysfunctional for young Muslims,⁵³ is Urdu's greatest asset among the non-Muslim majority.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Ahmad Rashid Shervani, "Educational Backwardness of Muslims in India," *The Nation* 26 December 1992, p. 7, and "Raising Performance Levels of Students in Selective (Muslim) Schools in India," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* III.2 (Winter 1981), pp. 99–103. For a report on Shervani's own exemplary Muslim school, see Marcus Franda, "Education for Young Muslims: The Crescent School of Old Delhi," *Reports*, No. 23 (Hanover, New Hampshire: American Universities Field Staff, 1979).

⁵¹Abram Sachar, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 1967) pp. 400–1, regards the Jewish supplemental schools as not very successful in maintaining group identity as most Jewish families sent their children to the public schools which were more secular (non-Christian) than in Europe. Louis Finkelstein, *The Jews: Their History, Customs and Religion* (New York: Harper Row, 1966), finds more to praise in their efforts in higher education, founding *yeshivas* (like Muslim *madrasas*) for training rabbis, and culminating, after World War II, with the foundation of a prestigious, English-medium institution, Brandeis University, the counterpart of Aligarh Muslim University in India.

⁵²William Safire, "On Language: Enough Already? What Am I, Chopped Liver? Two Yiddishisms That Made Their Way Into English Without Pause," *New York Times* [n.d., after 1992], magazine section; Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Muslim Mobility in India Through Peripheral Occupations: Sports, Music, Cinema and Smuggling," *Asie du Sud: Traditions et Changements*, eds. Marc Gaborieau and Alice Thorner (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Collection des Colloques Internationaux, 1979), pp. 271–8; "Yiddish: Schmooze II," *The Economist*, Vol. 328 (28 August 1993), pp. 82–3 has many examples such as schlep, chutzpah, maven, nosh, shtick, hoo-ha, schmooze, mechiah, meshuggah, mensch, borscht belt, bagels and lox.

⁵³Aijaz Ahmad, "Some Reflections on Urdu," *Seminar*, No. 359 (July 1989), pp. 23–9, argues that Urdu, being now cut off from the processes of schooling,

4. The greatest threat to the survival of Urdu and, more broadly, to the survival of Islamic values and culture, may not be Hindi but English.⁵⁵ Here Urdu-speaking Muslims and Hindi-speaking Hindus have an important common interest. I am not speaking of the exclusion of the English language by *aṅgrēzī haṭā'o* campaigns⁵⁶ which would isolate Indians from the world market, but about the protection of Indian culture of both kinds from the invasion of pornographic and violent American popular culture via satellite television, cinema and video.⁵⁷

administration and the professions, has become an exclusively literary language “divorced from the conceptual thinking and expression in such disciplines as history, philosophy and the social, not to speak of the physical sciences ... with a woefully limited stock of ideas and vocabularies ... strengthening the elements of decadence within the fabric of Urdu literature itself.”

⁵⁴“... the enormous success of Bombay made Hindi-Urdu film ... in most of (which) the language used is frankly Urdu but, for commercial and diplomatic reasons of censor certification, it is called Hindi. Thus the concept of ‘Hindi’ has been broadened to include Urdu.” Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, “Cinema and National Integration,” *Mainstream* 15 March 1986, pp. 18–21; Akbar S. Ahmed, “Bombay Films: The Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society and Politics,” *Modern Asian Studies* 26.2 (1992), pp. 289–320: “Take the language of the films, a hybrid of Hindi and Urdu. It is the lingua franca of an area the size of a continent”

⁵⁵Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, p. 315 on the massive use and attraction of English in Israel to the neglect of Arabic; Tariq Rahman, “The Urdu-English Controversy in Pakistan,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31 (February 1997), pp. 177–207; “English Made Compulsory From Standard V” (in Gujarat), *Times of India* 27 November 2000; A. Naseer Khan, “Linguistic Melodrama,” *Seminar*, No. 332 (April 1987) “Urdu a Linguistic Genocide,” pp. 30–4 on the Hindi protagonists’ preference for English-medium schools for their children.

⁵⁶Selma K. Sonntag, “The Political Saliency of Language in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh,” *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 34.2 (July 1996), pp. 8–12; Swapan Dasgupta, “At Peace With Angrezi,” *India Today* 11 December 2000, p. 17.

⁵⁷Theodore P. Wright, Jr., “Asian Values vs. Post-Modernity; the Media and Human Rights in South Asia,” paper delivered at the 14th European Conference on Modern South Asia, Prague, September 1998; Faizan Mustafa (of Aligarh Muslim University), “Information Superhighway, Cultural Invasion and Muslim Umma,” paper delivered at the 26th Annual Convention of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists, Brockport, N.Y., November 1997.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To spell out a specific set of policy recommendations which seem to flow from the foregoing comparative analysis:

1. Because of the rise of Hindutva in Indian politics, Urdu-knowing India Muslims will have to rely primarily on themselves, not the state, for the foreseeable future to preserve their language. Continuing bad relations between India and Pakistan make demands for effective central and state government support for Urdu in North India too politically sensitive to expect the parties to do any more than make it a political football. Promises are made during elections, but seldom carried out afterwards because of stronger counter pressures from the majority community.⁵⁸

2. Even to obtain recognition of Urdu as an official language and medium of instruction, while beneficial for minority morale, will likely further isolate and ghettoize Muslim youth from the mainstream economy, unless accompanied by bilingual education in Hindi. Given the high rate of Muslim (especially female Muslim) illiteracy, the most that can be accomplished for the bulk of the community is literacy in one language. If it were possible to reverse the Constituent Assembly's decision against Hindustani as the national lingua franca that would solve half the problem, but not the question of script. Urdu script is best learned in after school classes at *maktabs* rather than Arabic (except in Kerala).

3. This recommendation is NOT a prescription for either ethnic or religious suicide. I have cited the case of the revival of Irish and Scottish nationalism, despite the triumph of the English language in both countries, and accompanied by a token revival of Gaelic. As to the impact of Islam's survival, generations of Hindu élite have attended Christian missionary schools but the paucity of conversions to Christianity among the students must make one wonder why the foreign benefactors continue to support those schools. Generations of Jews have attended state schools in America and Europe with relatively few changes of religious affiliation and more of secularization and indifference to religion which is a consequence of modernization in any case.

⁵⁸Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "The Effectiveness of Muslim Representation in India," *South Asian Politics and Religion*, ed. Donald E. Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 102–37; I.K. Gujral, "Story of a Report," *Seminar*, No. 332 (April 1987) "Urdu a Linguistic Genocide," pp. 26–9.

4. What this recommendation for integration (not assimilation) implies for the preservation of minority religion and culture is, paradoxically, a massive effort at translation of the Urdu and Arabic classics into Devanagari and other Indian scripts, such as has been pioneered, I believe, by the Jamaat-i-Islami.⁵⁹ It is up to the parents, or if they are illiterate, to mullas to teach the children the Urdu pronunciation and vocabulary equivalents in the Hindi textbooks and newspapers. The thrust of Dr. Khalidi's survey, it seems to me, is that after fifty years of linguistic decline, it is too late to reverse the trend without seriously handicapping Muslim youth in the competition for jobs in the modern economy. I find it encouraging in Khalidi's paper that a new generation of Muslim journalists has adapted to the Hindi and English language press. It is probably well known to many of you that one of the most important sources of Zionist power over United States foreign policy in the Middle East is that the two most prestigious American newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, not to mention many of the television networks, are owned by members of the Jewish minority.

5. For the preservation of Urdu culture, however backward looking, it seems advisable to lay emphasis on those aspects of Indian culture in which Muslims already have some advantage: music, poetry, and the so-called Hindu film.⁶⁰ This helps build bridges to Hindu audiences. For those endeavors which do require political or legal organization and action, it had best be done by means of non-communally specific bodies such as for civil and minority rights,⁶¹ women's rights, secularism, and so

⁵⁹Danial Latifi, "Language and Script: A New Proposal," *The Monthly Statistical Commentary on Indian Economic Conditions* V.5 of the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (1963), proposing Roman script for all Indian languages and his "Preserving Urdu Through Self-Help," *Economic and Political Weekly* 29 May 1999, p. 1321. Even Professor of Urdu, Gopi Chand Narang, in an interview in *The Hindu* in 1995 approved of the writing of Urdu in Devanagari script provided Urdu script was not allowed to die.

⁶⁰Khawaja Ahmed Abbas, "Cinema and National Integration," pp. 18–21; Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Muslim Mobility in India Through Peripheral Occupations: Sports, Music, Cinema and Smuggling," pp. 271–8.

⁶¹However, see Theodore P. Wright, Jr., "Limitations on the Human Rights Approach to Problems of the Muslim Minority in India," *Indo-American Journal of Human Rights* (March 1989), pp. 13–5 (reprinted in *Muslim India* 86 (February 1990)), p. 88.

on, to which other Indian minority groups and liberal Hindus can comfortably adhere. □