

SECOND EDITION

SUBRATA K. MITRA

POLITICS IN INDIA

STRUCTURE, PROCESS AND POLICY





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This second edition of this textbook brings together general political theory and the comparative method to interpret socio-political phenomena and issues that have occupied the Indian state and society since 1947. It considers the progress that India has made in some of the most challenging aspects of post-colonial politics such as governance, democracy, economic growth, welfare, and citizenship. Looking at the changed global role of India, its standing in the G-20 and BRICS, as well as the implications of the 2014 Indian general elections for state and society, this updated edition also includes sections on the changing socio-political status of women in India, corruption and terrorism.

The author raises several key questions relevant to Indian politics, including:

- Why has India succeeded in making a relatively peaceful transition from colonial rule to a resilient, multi-party democracy in contrast to the South Asian neighbours?
- How has the interaction of modern politics and traditional society contributed to the resilience of post-colonial democracy?
- How did India's economy—moribund for several decades following Independence—make a breakthrough into rapid growth and can India sustain it?
- And finally, why have collective identity and nationhood emerged as the core issues for India in the twenty-first century and with what implications for Indian democracy?

The textbook goes beyond India by asking about the implications of the Indian case for the general and comparative theory of the post-colonial state. The factors which might have caused failures in democracy and governance are analysed and incorporated as variables into a model of democratic governance.

In addition to pedagogical features such as text boxes, a set of further readings is provided to guide readers who wish to go beyond the remit of this text. The book will be essential reading for undergraduate students and researchers in South Asian and Asian studies, political science, development studies, sociology, comparative politics and political theory.

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Politics in India

Structure, Process and Policy

Second Edition

Subrata K. Mitra

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The cover design depicts various facets of Indian Politics, which are distinctive in nature yet blend with one another, and come together, to give a holistic view. These are encompassed by the nation's national bird – the peacock. It is symbolic of a young, jubilant India and its unity in diversity.

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Preface

Politics in India is an introductory text. The book focuses on what holds the country together despite the radical diversities that mark India's noisy but effective democracy. It gives a concise account of India's political system, forms of representation and accountability, policies of growth and redistribution as well as the country's foreign and security policy. It is aimed mainly at three sets of readers. It offers the general reader a sense of Indian politics, through the analysis of how modern institutions function in a traditional setup. The discussion of democracy and discontent, state-market-society interaction and the role of domestic politics and global issues in the making of foreign policy are aimed at students of South Asian area studies and comparative politics. The complex relationship of legitimacy and governance in a post-colonial state, resilience of electoral democracy and its discontents, and, coping with the rise of the subaltern classes and collective identity-based movements, are aimed at those who specialize in state formation, public policy and development studies.

The second edition of *Politics in India* departs slightly from the original structure. As before, the main analytical framework, discussed in the introductory chapter, consists of countervailing forces and power-sharing which lead to the resilience of India's democratic governance. I have divided the concluding chapter of the previous edition into two new chapters. Chapter 9 draws on the general lessons of the Indian case for understanding the transition to democracy and its consolidation. The second part of the former Chapter 9 has now been turned into a short, new chapter (Chapter 10). It focuses on the issues and policies that concern India's future. All chapters of the new edition have been updated. Like in the previous edition, they discuss the structure of the Indian state, the functioning of key institutions, the economy and foreign policy. Additional material and sources meant for the specialist are confined to footnotes and the section on further reading.

Two major events have marked the transition of *Politics in India* from the first edition (2011) to the second. The massive victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Parliamentary elections of 2014, followed by its success in elections to several key regions, has put a new set of leaders at the head of India's political institutions. These leaders share a political vision which is markedly different from that of their predecessors. The other change is personal. My move from the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University to the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) of the National University of Singapore in 2015 has brought me closer to South Asia. My regular interaction with the

research community of ISAS, which has in its midst statesmen and diplomats with long years of service in South Asian states, has helped me appreciate the multiple pressures and urgency under which decision-makers, the key protagonists of my narrative, work on a regular basis.

Despite the sound and fury that characterize politics in India and the sweeping rhetoric that marks electoral campaigns, India's political structure, based on many interlocking interests, evolves in tiny, incremental steps. Such has been the case with the massive victory of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which many saw initially as a paradigm shift in Indian politics. After two years of the new government at the Centre, one can argue that politics in India continues within the same template of democratic governance as before, albeit under new management. The everyday business of passing legislations goes on under the din created by a fractious Parliament. The seamless transition of the BJP from Opposition to Government, the string of State Assembly victories of the BJP followed by its equally spectacular defeats in Delhi and Bihar, have reinforced the basic model of Indian politics presented in this book.

The second edition which appears after a gap of six years is an opportunity to reach out to new readers and reconnect with those who have read the previous edition. Writing on India for this vast readership, many of them located in India, comes to me as a personal challenge. India is the country of my birth. It is in India that I acquired my sense of the political, and my first training in political analysis. However, for the past four decades I have lived away from home, first as a graduate student at the University of Rochester, New York, and subsequently, as an academic in several countries of Asia, Europe and the United States. Speaking, then, as someone who has been 'taken out, looking in', the question that naturally arises is—what might I offer, particularly to readers in India about *their* politics to which, thanks to the information revolution sweeping across the country, they do not have access already?

My cautious response to this question is that Indian readers, deeply immersed in the minutiae of issues of everyday life, lose sight of 'the forest for the trees.' A comparative analysis from outside, with empathy for the culture and historical context of the region, might help put the contradictory trends of Indian politics in a general context. This will help assess the progress that India has made in some of the most challenging issues of post-colonial politics, such as governance, democracy, economic growth, welfare, and citizenship. There are four anchor points around which the book attempts to construct this larger picture. These are, (1) the effects of democratisation on marginal and peripheral groups of people located outside mainstream politics, cities and large towns, and political institutions; (2) penetration of the interstices of society, and economic and social life that had so far remained relatively untouched by market forces; (3) global connectivity—particularly through the vast Indian diaspora that reaches out to its social and religious networks; and, (4) the impact of modernization on culture and the traditional way of life.

The book draws on *rational choice* as a heuristic device with which to understand the structures and processes of Indian politics. It presents India's leaders and their followers, stakeholders and rebels, providers of patronage and supplicants, as *rational* actors who are driven by the single desire to get more of what they want. Like people anywhere in the world, chasing after goals set by themselves, they seek to avoid the worst and settle down for what is acceptable to them under the circumstances, while keeping a wary eye on the next opportunity. The use of rational choice as a conceptual tool does not suggest that there is a rational plan underpinning politics as we know, or even less—that

there is a high ‘rational’ plane from which elites can legislate the right course of action for lesser mortals to follow. By rational choice I understand goal-oriented, strategic behaviour which I attribute to India’s voters, political actors, leaders of political parties and movements, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs in all areas of life. This analytical approach, I argue, can enrich our knowledge of Indian politics, and supplement it with historical evolution, rather than going by cultural determinism or mere contingency.

The use of rational choice as an analytical tool is neither novel nor original. In fact, anyone analysing American, French or British politics will not assume any more, or less, about culture or political behaviour than instrumental rationality as the basis of individual choice and institutional arrangements. The reason to make the use of this analytical method explicit in the Indian case is that Indian politics is often understood differently from politics in *more developed societies*. Most of the classical grand theories of development, imperialism and economic growth have built on India as a case in point. They have conceptualized Indian behaviour in terms of the *otherness* of Indian culture—which is seen as holistic, spiritual, organic, traditional and hierarchical. In contrast, my approach is to analyse politics from ‘below’ and ‘above’ in terms of what people in India are aiming to achieve, through a diversity of methods, ranging between voting, campaigning, contacting or agitating, rebelling or taking recourse to political violence—to reach their goals.

The obverse side of the picture is the coping mechanism of the state and the creation of rules with which the state seeks to run the political process in an organized manner. Of course, the maximisation of individual interests does not always enhance collective welfare. The creation of rules and the use of force to constrain individual strategies become the *raison d’être* of the state. The post-colonial state in India has been more successful than many others in achieving orderly rule, democracy, legitimacy, welfare and citizenship. This has been possible because, often, India’s leaders and bureaucrats have successfully guided people towards behaviour amenable to rules which are—thanks to democratic decentralization and accountability—increasingly ‘co-authored’ by the state and society.

This is primarily a book about India’s politics—comprising institutions, processes, behaviour—and norms. It aims at providing concise answers to specific issues of Indian politics, and, develop broad generalizations based on the case of contemporary India. Beyond the case of India, the experience of the country holds valuable lessons for students of comparative politics as well. Not being a post-revolutionary state in the mould of China, with a fixed political agenda and a cadre based party charged with its implementation, India’s leaders, working within a broadly socialist and democratic program of social change, have improvised as well as they could. Post-Independence India was not a nation-state, but a state seeking to constitute a nation. In Europe, democracy was the ultimate reward for the fortunate survivors of the industrial, cultural, religious and national revolutions that often brought great misery to minorities and the lower social orders. India, wanting the same goals of economic growth, nation-building and national security as in the case of nascent European states, had to work out of a national and international context that was vastly different. Pulverisation of social and ethnic difference in the name of a ‘higher goal’—which is how emerging European nation-states reached the modern world—could not be condoned by India’s liberal constitution—nor by western democracies—committed to promoting western-type liberal democracy all over the world. India’s successful transition to democracy and its consolidation stand out as an exception, compared to many new states who sought to achieve the same goal as

India. The Indian experiment is, therefore, crucial to the general theory of transition to democracy and its consolidation.

The balance between self-rule and shared rule is a key to the Indian success story. The promotion of sub-system autonomy, institutional space, regional governance, and innovative federal arrangements and Union-State relations are used as a corrective force when this equilibrium breaks down. Institutional innovation, and adapting modern political institutions to a traditional society have been, from the outset, a key feature of Indian politics. The implementation of *Panchayati Raj* has been far from uniform. However, thanks to the Seventy-Third Amendment to the Constitution in 1993, all of India's half-million villages are now covered by directly elected village councils in which representation of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is mandatory. The process of democracy transition and consolidation, over the years, has become self-sustaining.

The national emergency of 1975–1977, which saw a temporary abrogation of democracy, united a wide range of political forces for the defence of civil liberties. These groups—consisting of lawyers, journalists, academics, social workers, and political activists—became an important pressure group starting in the 1980s. Their presence and intervention have publicized the struggles of vulnerable social groups and exposed acts of administrative injustice and, in more extreme cases, state repression. This development has led to the emergence of a new social class of mediators in the political process, generally called “social activists.” There is a new genre of “movements” that have an economic content, but are multidimensional and cover a large terrain in practice. This new genre includes high-profile environmental movements, women’s groups, civil-liberties advocates, movements for regional self-determination and autonomy, and peasant movements. Other groups focus on peace, disarmament, and denuclearization. In India, civil society activism, drawing on both conventional and unconventional forms of political action has captured the wider spectrum of social movements. This development of civil society activism has strengthened the process of democratic consolidation in India. The recent Jan Lokpal Bill Movement under the general leadership of Anna Hazare, building on the legacy of a similar broad-based popular movement against the authoritarian rule of Indira Gandhi, shows the power of India’s civil society as a foundation stone of this post-colonial democracy. These political movements—a generic form of collective political action—both challenge and complement the democratic political process.

The book also covers issues of comparative interest such as how contentious politics and the market economy affect one another, and how economic diplomacy and the imperative of national security affect India’s foreign policy. In some ways, the economic policies of 1991 to liberalize the economy and implement a policy of privatisation of public-sector undertakings went against the grain of Indian politics. As far as ancient Indian tradition goes, the *Arthashastra* had allocated a number of key sectors of the economy to the exclusive authority of the king. This tradition of state monopoly was continued by practically all the rulers of India, coming to a peak under British colonial rule. Indian entrepreneurs were content after Independence to find a secure *niche* within the structure of the mixed economy. Each obstacle to free enterprise was also the visible tip of a powerful vested interest. As such, it comes as no surprise that attempts to roll the state back have produced a powerful backlash from a formidable coalition: socialists who wanted to protect the poor and underprivileged from the ravages of capitalism, rich farmers who feared the loss of government subsidies, the *swadeshi* lobby which was

apprehensive about the loss of Indian political autonomy and cultural identity, and regional leaders who feared the growing gap between rich and poor parts of India without the presence of a powerful, redistributive Union government. The dual objectives of growth and redistribution will continue to underpin the structure and process of Indian politics.

I have kept these anchor points implicit in the text, leaving it to the reader to tease out the larger picture. The book documents some of the amendments to the original design—in citizenship, democracy, party building, federalism, and in general, the creation of a level playing field. It points out how modern institutions, strategic reform and policy processes have been enriched by India's political leaders, administrators, and rebels turned into stakeholders. This has been achieved not through dogma or conscious ideologies but through the sheer fact of engaging in everyday politics, sometimes with quixotic zeal, and innovating new methods when the path indicated by general theory trails off into the bush and one still must go on.

No ‘single-authored’ book, much less a text book, can be attributed to a single author. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my intellectual debt to my graduate training at the University of Rochester (1972–76), and particularly to my three inspiring teachers: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, G. Bingham Powell, Jr., and William Riker. The basic training in rational choice and comparative politics that I got from them has been enriched through subsequent interchanges with Gabriel Almond, Myron Weiner, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, Rajni Kothari, D.L. Sheth, Ashis Nandy, Bashiruddin Ahmad and Bhikhu Parekh. Generations of gifted students—in Hull, Nottingham, Berkeley, Heidelberg, and now in Singapore, have deepened my understanding of both India and Politics.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Ambassador Shri Gopinath Pillai, Chairman of the Management Board of ISAS, and the research community, for the stimulating environment of the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS, NUS) and the institutional support that I have received over the past years. I would like to thank Javed Burki, Iftekhar Chowdhury, Riaz Hassan, Rahul Mukherji, S. Narayan, Amitendu Palit, Vinod Rai, Jivanta Schoettli, Ronojoy Sen, Duvvuri Subbarao and Tan Tai Yong and the young colleagues of ISAS who have made our regular meetings both lively and edifying. My sincere thanks are to Dorothea Schaefer and Lily Brown at Routledge who have processed the manuscript with exemplary care. I am grateful to Rinisha Dutt for her meticulous attention to the chapter on the Indian economy, support with statistics and her imaginative cover design. Taisha Grace Antony, who succeeded Rinisha, has rendered valuable help with research on elections and seen the manuscript diligently through the production process. The administrative help of Peggy Tan, Johnson Paul and Hernaikh Singh is gratefully acknowledged.

My final thoughts are with Marie-Paule, and the bonds struck at the University of Rochester as fellow students. This has sustained me morally over the past four decades of my peripatetic professional life. The book is dedicated to our daughter, Emilie Kalyani Mitra, my critical and loving ‘first reader.’

Singapore, February 2017

Subrata K. Mitra

Abbreviations

AAP	Aam Aadmi Party
ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
ADMK	Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AICC	All India Congress Committee
AIDMK	All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AISSF	All India Sikh Students' Federation
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BKS	Bharatiya Kisan Sangh
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation
CPI	(M-L) Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) CPI(M)
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CSDS	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi
CWC	Congress Working Committee
DK	Dravida Kazhagam
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
FBL	All-India Forward Bloc
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HDI	Human Development Index
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
IFDP	Indian Federal Democratic Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INC	Indian National Congress. A breakaway faction of the Congress, founded in 1978 by D. Devaraj Urs, renamed in 1981 as Indian Congress (Socialist)
IPC	Indian Penal Code
JD	Janata Dal
JNP	Janata Party
LF	Left Front (in West Bengal)

LJNS	Lok Jan Shakti Party
MDMK	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament (of either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NES	National Election Study (of the CSDS)
NF	National Front (the Janta Dal and its allies)
NTC	National Trinamool Congress
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PDS	Party for Democratic Socialism
PMK	Pattali Makkal Katchi
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RPI	Republican Party of India
RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Sabha)
SAD	Shiromani Akali Dal
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SGPC	Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee
SP	Samajwadi Party
SRC	States' Reorganization Commission, 1957
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
WTO	World Trade Organization

Glossary

Adivasi	Forest-dwelling aboriginal tribes
Ahimsa	Sanskrit for non-violence, an important element of the politics of Mahatma Gandhi
Bandh	Collective cessation of public activities
Bhadralok	Upper strata of society in Eastern India
Bhukh	Hindi for ‘hunger’, is used in particular forms of strike, e.g., <i>bhukh hartal</i> , meaning ‘hunger strike’
Booth Capturing	Forcible take-over of a polling booth by criminal elements with the intention of appropriating the votes
Boycott	A form of strike action where all contact is broken off
Brahmin	Member of the first <i>varna</i> ; the priestly class
Dak bungalow	Outposts of the British Raj in the country, temporary home to civilian officers on tour, still in use all over India
Dalal	Commission agent
Dalit	Literally, oppressed; often refers to the Scheduled Castes
Devaswom Boards	Set up during British rule to administer religious property in South India. Similar administrative bodies were set up in other parts of the colony as well. Their successor institutions are still responsible for the administration of religious property.
Dharma	Universal cosmic law, specific to Hindu scriptures and social practice
Dharna	A form of sit-in strike
Durbar	A royal court in a traditional set-up. The practice was taken over by British rulers and was organized on occasions of great imperial significance.
Emerging Markets	Less developed countries where new markets for global trade and services are emerging
Gherao	To surround a decision-maker
Harijan	Literally, children of God; coined by Mahatma Gandhi to give respectability to the former Untouchables
Hartal	Strike action
Hindutva	Literally ‘Hinduness’, Hindu social values
Jail Bharo Andolan	To fill the jails in a form of radical protest
Jajmani	Traditional system of patron-client relationship
Jāti	Localized caste
Joint Venture	Private Corporations with Indian and foreign partners

Karma	Accumulated result of past actions
Kharif	Monsoon crop
Kisan	Literally, peasant
Kshatriya	Member of the second <i>varna</i> ; the warrior, governing or princely class
Mixed Economy	A core principle of India's developmental model based on public private partnership
Moksha	Salvation; ultimate liberation from the nexus of rebirth
Morcha	A demonstration intended as a show of force
Neta	A vernacular term for 'leader'
Panchayat	Village council
Panchayat Samiti	Area council, consisting of village <i>panchayats</i>
Panchayati Raj	Local self-government at the village, sub-district and the district level (literally, the rule of the five)
Partition	The territorial division of British India in 1947 into the independent states of India and Pakistan
President's Rule	Direct rule by the central government in a federal state (under Article 356 of the Indian constitution)
Quota Permit Raj	Literally, a regime based on the grant of quotas, permits and licences—an expression used to indicate patronage as a part of the politics of the INC
Rabi	Winter crops
Raj	Literally, rule; hence, British Raj or <i>Panchayati Raj</i>
Rasta Roko	Hindi for stopping vehicular traffic as a part of a protest movement
Reservation Policy	The policy of setting aside a quota of jobs in public services and places in educational institutions for underprivileged social groups
Riots	Criminal uprising of five or more people
Sadhu	Hindu holy man
Sanskritization	A traditional method of upward social mobility practised by lower Hindu castes, consisting of imitating rituals and dress of the upper castes
Sarkar	Hindi for 'government'
Sarpanch	Leader of a <i>panchayat</i>
Satyagraha	In Sanskrit 'holding on to truth', employed most famously by Mahatma Gandhi against British colonial rule
Scheduled Castes	Formerly untouchable communities grouped together by the government under Article 341 of the Indian constitution which entitles them to special privileges under the policy of reservation
Scheduled Tribes	Forest-dwelling tribes grouped together by the government under Article 342 of the Indian constitution which entitles them to special privileges under the policy of reservation
Sudras	The lowest stratum (<i>varna</i>) of the Hindu caste system
Swadeshi	A term popularized by Mahatma Gandhi to refer to the consumption of only home-made goods
Swaraj	Hindi for 'self-rule' or 'self-determination', popularized by Mahatma Gandhi

Untouchables	Lower orders of the Hindu caste system who are considered ritually polluted
Vaisyas	Literally, ‘commoners’, members of the third <i>varna</i> ; traditionally the economically productive classes, such as farmers, merchants, bookkeepers and money lenders
Varna	The four-fold division of Hindu society as referred to in classical texts
Vote Bank	A group of voters whose votes are controlled by a local leader
Zamindari	From the Hindi <i>zamindar</i> (landlord); <i>zamindari</i> denotes a practice introduced by the British colonial government
Zilla Parishad	District council, comprising all <i>Sarpanches</i> and other directly elected members

1 Introduction

Modern politics and traditional society in the making of *Indian* democracy

Men make their history upon the basis of prior conditions.

Hazel Barnes, paraphrasing Marx, Engels and Sartre, in *Search for a Method* (1963)
translated by Hazel Barnes
(1968), p. xviii

Democracy breaks the chain and severs every link of it.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856),
cited, in Dumont (1970), p. 1

Some puzzles of India's politics

Politics in contemporary India can come across as baffling to those who are unfamiliar with its distinctive style. Its noisy, effective and resilient democracy is a puzzle. The co-existence of modernity and tradition is equally puzzling. A modern state with an emerging market, India still retains some features of a developing country. Modern politicians in ethnic garb, holy men and women democratically elected to high office, mass poverty, urban squalor, traditional rituals performed on state occasions and at the inauguration of cutting-edge technological projects, modern buildings containing enterprises based on state-of-the-art technology surrounded by fields with subsistence agriculture, using most primitive tools, mark the landscape of the vast country. With its continental dimensions, vibrant traditions, living religions, ethnic and linguistic diversity, expanding market, steady economic growth, ethnic and religious conflict, mass poverty, deprivation and gender violence, contemporary India is a bundle of contradictions. Even for visitors who come equipped with prior knowledge of the country, surprises abound.

A country that cherishes the non-violent legacies of Gautama Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi, India is nonetheless a proud possessor of nuclear weapons and long-range missile delivery capacity. The wrangling within India's political establishment regarding the nuclear weapons, anti-nuclear movements and the ambiguity of India's nuclear doctrine, however, lead to global perplexity about the real intentions that underpin India's nuclear capacity. Other incongruities abound. India's general elections, the largest in the world in scale, are generally free and fair, but they can take up to six weeks to be completed as armed troops, who need to be deployed for safe conduct of the polls, must be moved from one part of the country to another. Power changes hands

2 Introduction

peacefully through democratic elections, but an alarming number of legislators carry criminal records. Beyond politics, one comes across the same welter of images that are at once confusing and contradictory. Internet cafes, slums and beggars jostle for space in overcrowded cities; vicious inter-community riots and terrorist attacks come and go, and yet everyday life continues, apparently undisturbed. A deeper stability appears to underlie the discord that marks the political landscape on the surface. The combination of diversity and inequality, the bane of many developing societies, does not appear to disturb the stability of India's political system.¹

India emerged from a century and a half of British colonial rule as an independent country in 1947, but with a truncated territory, a stagnant economy, and a fragmented society. In contrast, today, the country projects a picture of remarkable achievements across several fields stretching from trade, technology and the arts to social mobility, democracy and steady economic growth. Most of all, in contrast to most post-colonial states, India has achieved both democracy and development. Seen in cross-national comparison,² India belongs to the middle level of developing countries such as Mexico and Iran in terms of health, education and welfare. China, which has an edge over India in terms of quality of life, is a better point of comparison.³ However, India's overall ability to sustain democratic governance *and* social change marks her out as exceptional in comparison both to the middle-level developing countries, and to China. This puzzle underpins the detailed empirical analysis of India's state, society, economy and foreign policy undertaken in this book.

Emerging India, poised to become a major player in the global economy, and knocking at the door of the United Nations Security Council for a permanent seat, has generated a new interest in the country's politics and economy, as one can see from the spate of new writing on India.⁴ The economy, torpid under long years of colonial rule, gathered momentum after independence, but grew only at a pace that many referred to derisively as the 'Hindu rate of growth'.⁵ Growing at about one and a half percent net during the four decades following Independence, India's economy was outpaced by the country's competitors, big and small. The trend changed radically in the 1990s with the 'liberalization' of the economy in 1991.⁶ The dismantling of the legal and administrative barriers to free trade and industry has opened new avenues and global connectivity for India's entrepreneurs. The past two decades have seen both a respectable rate of growth at about 6 percent and a significant reduction of mass poverty.⁷ Though, like the rest of the world, India's economy was hit by the economic crisis of 2008–9, the impact has been less severe, signifying the underlying strength and resilience of India's economy.⁸

Still, these shining stories of success are framed by a penumbra of a darker hue. Every violent clash between castes, classes, ethnic groups, religious groups, clashes between the police and demonstrators, makes one ask if the relative calm of India is merely a façade, superimposed on deep discontent, seething just under the surface. But, that said, in India, a country of apparent contradictions, the opposite argument is equally plausible. Raucous manifestations and unruly crowds often turn out to be in practice a part of political theatre—a quintessentially Indian form of political participation through strategic protest—where the characters are manipulated from behind the scenes by leaders who have themselves risen from the ranks of the discontented, and subsequently, have developed a taste for office and a deep stake in the system.⁹

These puzzling facts of Indian politics can be formulated in terms of five interrelated questions. First, why did India, in contrast to most post-colonial states, succeed in making a relatively peaceful transition from colonial rule to a resilient, multi-party

BOX 1.1 ‘SALIENT FEATURES’/‘UNITY IN DIVERSITY’

- **Population:** 1.282 billion (2015)
- **Population Growth rate:** 1.29 percent (2015)
- **Total Area (land & water):** 3,287,263 square km¹²
- **29 Federal States**
- **7 Union Territories**
- **Official languages:**
English, Hindi (primary tongue of 30 percent of the population), Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Odia, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Sanskrit.
- **Religion:**
Hindu (79.8 percent), Muslim (14.2 percent), Christian (2.3 percent), Sikh (1.7 percent), Buddhist (0.7 percent), Jain (0.4 percent), others (0.7 percent). (2011)
- **Real GDP per capita, (current US\$):** 1581.6 (2015)
- **Scheduled Castes:** 16.6 percent of the population (2011)
- **Scheduled Tribes:** 8.6 percent of the population (2011)

Sources: Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Census 2011, www.censusindia.gov.in; Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html; World Bank, Database, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/india>; all accessed June 3rd, 2015.

democracy? Secondly, how did India, long a synonym for mass poverty and low growth, change into a fast-growing economy, with a burgeoning middle class, global networks and ambitions, without curtailing democratic institutions and rights? Thirdly, what is the impact of high growth and integration with the international market economy on mass poverty? Fourthly, how successful has India been in turning her hierarchic society into one of equal *citizens*, who have a moral and political stake in the system?¹⁰ Finally, regarding global ranking in terms of national security and power, is India still a country that is ‘constantly emerging but never quite emerging’?¹¹

These questions, important in the context of India,¹² are of general and comparative significance as well. The book responds to these queries by drawing on India’s complex and diverse cultures, economic heritage, political attitudes, the vitality of her social and political processes, the strategies and rhetoric of the political elites, particularly from the lower social classes, and the expanding democratic system that directly affects India’s 600,000 villages.¹³ The chapters undertake the analysis of India’s politics at three levels of the political system.¹⁴ The first, *structure*, refers to the main institutional arrangements of the state such as the federation (referred to as the Union in India’s constitution), the executive, legislative and judicial organs of the state and the separation of powers, the implementing and quasi-rule-making bodies such as the bureaucracy and national commissions, and the institutions responsible for articulating and aggregating political demands of the electorate such as political parties, interest groups and non-governmental organizations.¹⁵ The second level, *process*, refers to the two-way channels that connect

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the government and the people. These are defined by Powell et al. (2012: 568) as ‘interest articulation, interest aggregation, policymaking, and implementation and adjudication of policy’.¹⁶ The third dimension, *public policy*, broadly refers to what India’s federal, regional and local governments do in their day-to-day activities. Grouped under four headings by Mitra (2012),¹⁷ these functions have implications for the economy, security, social solidarity, identity and foreign affairs, broadly referring to India’s standing in the international arena.¹⁸

Popular democracy and elite agency: the ‘room to manoeuvre in the middle’

The search for answers to the five questions raised above points towards a variety of sources and methods. India has been a subject of fascination for visitors—from ancient Greece and China onwards—just as it continues to be, for authors of a wide range of modern travelogues.¹⁹ The reference list has been further enriched thanks to the vast post-war literature on democracy, development and modernization, where India features as an interesting, and deviant case in point.²⁰ The liberal, evolutionary, developmental approach that casts the Indian case as part of a general process of democratization is still the most popular among specialists.²¹ The opposite genre that focuses on the unique and exceptional character of India goes by the name of Orientalism.²² A third approach finds the best entry point to India in the caste system, which many see as a unique attribute of the country. One of its best-known exponents is Louis Dumont, whose *homo hierarchicus* presents Indian society in terms of the cohesive bond of caste—an interdependent social network based on complementary status and function—which, some argue, has held Indian society together through millennia despite foreign invasion and other forms of political dislocation.²³ At the other extreme are various shades of Marxist analysts who cast Indian society in terms of a state of disequilibrium, caused by the main contradiction between the owners of capital and land on the one hand, and the emerging classes of peasants and workers on the other.²⁴

The main approach to Indian politics in this book²⁵ combines elements of all these schools of thought. While retaining the structural-functional core of the liberal modernization approach, the analysis undertaken here brings on board conflict—, of classes, castes, ethnic groups, regions and religions—, as an integral part of India’s political process and not merely as its aberration. Culturally embedded categories of affinity, loyalty, kin solidarity, identity or religion are important phenomena and not necessarily as the sublimation of some deeper value, such as class or the Indian ‘way of life’. My approach puts the main burden of explanation on the role of the state as *both* neutral and partisan, depending on the context, and the capacity of the political elites—both those in power and their adversaries—dispersed over the political system, mobilizing supporters comprising men and women acting in their own interest or according to their own beliefs. These leaders—hinges of the state and society at the national, regional and local levels—and their followers, are *rational* actors. They consciously pursue their goals and combine all the resources—material, symbolic and moral—at their command to bring influence to bear on the decision process, hoping for an outcome favourable to them.²⁶

These leaders—*netas* in Hindi—are located at the crucial nodes of the political system such as the federal government, regional States, district headquarters and local government. A few of them are nominated, co-opted or are social notables, but increasingly, most are elected. They are ubiquitous, ensconced in public commissions, departments

of the government and semi-official bodies, political parties, social movements and other arenas of public and sometimes private life. Socially, they are a heterogeneous body, comprising both men and women (though fewer women than men), representing all age groups and people from upper social classes just as many from the middle and lower castes. Some, particularly from the former untouchable castes and tribal people, come through the route of India's quota system which goes by the name 'reservation'. People from different religions and ethnic origins also get representation in bodies such as the national Minorities Commission that have been set up for their welfare.

What distinguishes India's political system from many 'transitional systems' is that India's leaders are not drawn from any particular social background, or ethnic group but cut across all social cleavages. The diversity of their social origin is the combined result of political competition through which they are recruited, a fair examination system based on merit and a quota system that seeks to make up for social disadvantages from which former untouchables, tribal people and women have suffered from time immemorial. Political majorities which propel leaders into positions of power are the result of short-term alliances. Political power thus comes not as an entitlement but as a valued resource that one must compete for and the holders of power are aware of its transience, and of the imperative of accountability, both horizontally to their peers, the judiciary, media and inquiry commissions and vertically, to the electorate. The capacity of India's leaders to act as intermediaries between competing social groups, and to straddle between the traditional society and the modern state, without being exclusively identified with either modernity or tradition, and to innovate new institutional arrangements co-authored by both state and society explain the success of India's democracy and governance.²⁷

The existence of the room to manoeuvre for national, regional and local political elites in the context of a transitional society, giving them enough space to successfully innovate new strategies and set up effective institutions, is by no means automatic, universal or self-evident. Nor is elite capacity for innovation, intervention and mediation, crucial resources that account for the resilience of the modern state in a traditional setting, only a matter of political will. It is influenced by an ensemble of factors, such as the spatial context and political culture in which the decision-making body is ensconced, the institutional arrangement, the vertical and horizontal accountability of the elites, and the method of their recruitment.²⁸ The model that encompasses these ideas provides a contrast to classical Marxist models of politics. These specify class conflict as natural and necessary, society as bi-polar, the state—lacking in autonomy—as an agent of dominant social groups, and political choice as preordained. The explanatory model presented below in Figure 1.1 accounts for the resilience of the Indian state and robustness of India's institutions. This model casts India's political elites as intermediaries between groups in conflict. It presents the policy process as an instrument that holds the potential to turn subjects into citizens and transform rebels into stakeholders. This dynamic model of governance introduces policy responsiveness, and strategic social and economic reform as tools of intervention. The perception of elites by ordinary people as responsive and effective can lower the incentive for breaking the law and taking things into their own hands.

The model depicted in Figure 1.1 provides the key argument for the analysis of the structure and process of the Indian political system, transition to democracy and its consolidation. The model suggests that the willingness and ability of the decision-makers to manage law and order, to undertake strategic social and economic reforms

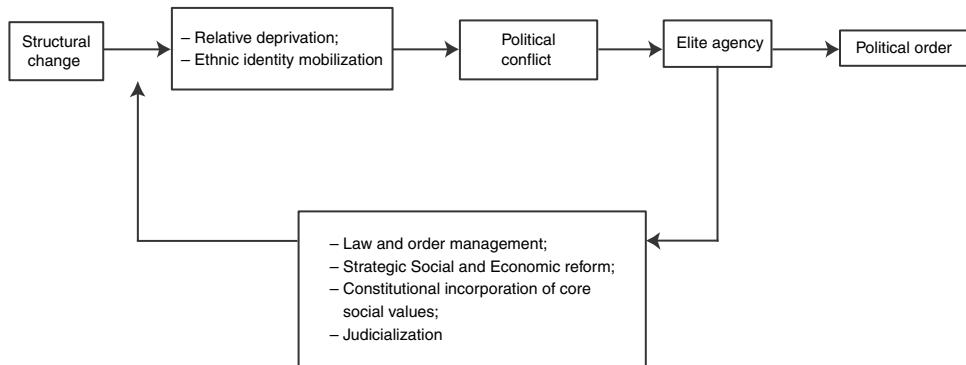


Figure 1.1 Structure, process and policy: the dynamics of India's governance.

Source: Author's own.

and accommodate collective identity in the constitution, is of crucial importance for democratic governance. Social and economic reform have helped by facilitating the entry of groups that had no access to power before into the civil service, new occupations and enter the political arena. In the place of low social status and inequality resulting from birth, there is a new sense of entitlement, empowerment and enfranchisement among marginal social groups. The country's significant achievement in positive discrimination shows how India has successfully severed the cultural and economic links between birth, caste and occupation.²⁹ Legislative reform and administrative measures have whittled away social privilege and introduced punitive measures against discrimination. The institution of quotas in education, legislatures and government jobs has permitted former untouchables³⁰ who have suffered from centuries of discrimination to climb the social and political ladder.³¹ When elite initiatives result in redistributive policies and constitutional change, they lead to the reduction of perceived inequality and enhance the capacity to assert their identity in the public sphere. Once abstract issues like values and identity are incorporated into the constitution through appropriate changes in the rules of the game and creation of new arenas, deep and seemingly intractable conflict reverts to the everyday politics of conflict over material interests and trenchant negotiations.

The account of Indian politics offered in this book is based on the model depicted in Figure 1.1. It is based on the premise that orderly social and economic change is possible when elites—political leaders, civil servants and other decision-makers—are willing and able to manage orderly rule, strategic distribution of welfare. Their active intervention helps retain political support and legitimacy of the political system. It leads to strategic reform, the creation of new norms, and the accommodation of identity. In India, most of the decision-making elites, having reached their positions through competitive elections that are mostly fair and transparent, merit based on competition or a quota system, are aware of their accountability. When the dynamic model of governance becomes an integral part of the political system, it helps generate efficiency, and legitimacy, and acts as a guarantee for representation and social justice.

The chapters in this book flesh out the logical connection between order, welfare and identity on the one hand and governance and legitimacy on the other. This is done by

showing how India—a desperately poor, fragmented, post-colonial state at the time of Independence in 1947—went on to establish a stable, resilient, democratic and orderly political system. Chapter 2 discusses how the juxtaposition of effective participation in limited experiments in the devolution of power under colonial rule and participation in both modern British institutions and the anti-colonial movement increased the scope of self-governance. With the Transfer of Power that brought India independence, these norms, institutions and traditions were also carried over to the new order. As we will see in the next chapter, these generated a sense of agency and space for political learning and bargaining in India after independence.

The pre-independence record of limited participation became an important legacy for the post-colonial state that emerged from the Transfer of Power. The sense of agency was reinforced through social reform and mutations of the caste system, taken up in detail in Chapter 3. The transformation of British subjects into Indian citizens has been possible through the linkage of caste associations—an important element of political mobilization in the early elections—and has contributed to the growth of a political culture based on competition and the creation of short-term coalitions. The innovation of an effective institutional arrangement to provide a necessary context and room to manoeuvre to political agency has been taken up in chapter 4. Chapter 5 shows the evolution of agency further in the shape of the empowerment of regional governments through the federal system. This has made it possible for State governments—under the prodding of vote-hungry politicians and resource-seeking voters—to replicate the national model of order, welfare and identity in regional arenas. In chapter 6, one can see how India has generated multiple methods of participation—through the conflation of political parties, pressure groups, lobbying and various forms of direct action—to enhance the sense of agency, trust, efficacy and legitimacy. Chapter 7 takes up the issue of appropriate economic policies as part of agency and empowerment. Chapter 8, focused on foreign policy, discusses the issue of national agency in the global space. It examines the role of the national state in the international arena, where the Indian state competes for power and resources against other members of the international community.

The political process that underpins the model is dynamic. Strategic reform and innovative social policies generate both political resistance as well as new demands. This model of democratic governance seeks to blend political structure, process and policy to generate new norms and institutions. The innovation of new institutions and process of a ‘hybrid’ character, blending tradition and modernity, produces appropriate platforms for the conduct of the political process. New legislations like the Right to Information Act have reinforced this process which plays a significant role in India’s democratic transition and consolidation. In consequence, the process of politics-led democratic social change has acquired a steady character in India. Despite occasional lapses, the country’s leadership has succeeded in carrying out this task, most of the time, and in more places of the vast landscape of India than is the case in most post-colonial, transitional societies. India’s institutions such as the Election Commission, judiciary and the media have ensured that elites remain politically accountable. The fact that most of India’s elites, rather than being social notables born to power and privilege, are professional politicians who have risen from the ranks, makes them a crucial intermediary between the modern state and traditional society.

The availability of this room to manoeuvre in the middle sets India sharply apart from other post-colonial societies. Political stability in the locality and region in post-Independence India, as in most post-colonial societies, was potentially vulnerable to challenges by socially marginal groups, empowered by competitive electoral

mobilization. However, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and the generation of leaders who took power after independence, they could anticipate these crises and respond to them through law and order management, strategic reform and redistributive policies, and constitutional change. This gave legitimacy to the political process that contested, embedded values, and acted as a corrective measure that contributed to the overall resilience of the political system in India.

Current issues and policy challenges

The book responds to the issues of growth, distribution, democratization of a hierarchic and diverse society. This has come about through application of the Constitution adopted at the start of its post-independence journey and innovation of new norms, social and economic reform and, strategic deployment of the forces of order to hold the country together.

Public policy—the selective and strategic allocation of resources, rather than the threat of violence or manipulation of kin networks—is the main mode of politics in liberal democracies. Thanks to the increasingly global diffusion of norms of accountability, even in the world of transitional societies, effective public policy, more than political repression has emerged as a vital ingredient of political order, and legitimacy. Today, in most political systems, regardless of the level of their affluence, ideological orientation of their leaders and the political assertiveness of their population, the leaders need to meet some minimum criteria of performance to retain their legitimacy. However, India is different from other developing societies in this sense. Though the country lacks the resources and organized interest groups of affluent Western democracies, India's level of participation, compared to mature democracies, is still very impressive.

The engagement of India's political elites with policy making in four areas, namely distribution, extraction, regulation and symbolic outputs remains generally high, though there is considerable regional variation in responses to the issues involved. The interplay of federalism, elections and party competition, the independent and socially engaged Indian judiciary and the watchful eye of Indian and international human rights movements have combined to produce a political environment which has generated political space for newly emerging social groups and helped sustain democracy and development. Each chapter of this book tells the story of the evolution of appropriate institutions, state-society interaction and the making of effective public policy. Measures such as scholarships and educational quotas for the children of the underprivileged, midday meal schemes in schools, and loan waivers for farmers in dire financial straits have helped bolster the legitimacy of India's political system.

Following sustained development and democratic governance in the past six decades, today the stock image of India as a poor country caught in the grooves of persistent poverty and underdevelopment no longer corresponds to reality. The opening of India's economy to internal and international competition over the past two decades is one of the most important aspects of the environment that influences the making of public policy in India. As India's economy gets gradually integrated with the international market economy, the political institutions designed during the tumultuous days of the *Transfer of Power* and the violence of the *Partition*—discussed at length in Chapter 2—are called upon to face new, unforeseen challenges. The emerging markets, joint ventures and the availability of skilled, low-cost professionals adept with new information technologies are a challenge as well as an opportunity for foreign business, industry, and financial investors.

As macroeconomic decisions are taken by elites at the national level cascade down the levels of government of the vast country, their reverberations affect lives and political processes in the federal States, districts and villages, calling for counter-mobilization by the disaffected. The international visibility of India's successful information technology (IT) sector and the outsourcing of routine, clerical functions by many of the world's major companies to India to take advantage of lower wages and the consistently high rate of economic growth may have temporarily shifted attention away from India's mass poverty. But the issue of poverty returns to haunt the politicians and bureaucrats at the time of elections. Even by India's modestly defined poverty rate, about 29 percent of the population continues to be classified as poor.³² Reduction in numbers, which used to be as high as 50 percent of the population in 1995, gives some scope for optimism. But the gains of economic growth have not significantly trickled down to the hardcore poor, trapped in inaccessible parts of the country which are beyond the pale of the market and the competitive political process.³³ To the list of the deprived, one must add the 'new poor'—, deeply indebted farmers whose sad fate has come to the attention of the world through spectacular cases of suicide. And just as the accelerated economic growth and ascending affluence in lifestyles of the expanding middle-class make resilient, residual poverty relatively more visible and jarring so does the increasing vigilance of the media and middle class alertness draw attention to other pathologies of contemporary India. Chief among them is corruption which has drawn sharp attention from the judiciary, political activists and increasingly, the middle class which in the past have often remained aloof from everyday politics.

Corruption as a challenge to good governance

Corruption at all levels of the system is one of the main social and political challenges in India. Its persistence casts a shadow on the country's economic boom and threatens its credibility as a place for foreign investment and fair business practices. Corruption has grown exponentially during the various stages of the country's economic development, especially after the shift from 'mixed economy' in the 1980s and its transformation during liberalization in the early 1990s. Ironically, processes of globalization and the acceleration of international trade, capital inflows and an increasing intermingling of private and public enterprises have also contributed to an astounding increase of corruption in India. Today, corruption is deeply entrenched in all spheres of economic and political-administrative spheres, so much so that many believe it has almost become an accepted way of getting things done. Consequently, the country is ranked 85th out of 176 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (TICPI) of 2014³⁴. Bribery and corrupt practices and its causes can be found in all areas like social spending schemes and entitlement programs by the government and respective institutions, bids and allocations of government posts, admissions, and licenses. Most important is the changing face and quality of corruption. It is no longer about petty payments demanded by civil servants to get specific demands of a local character addressed or basic services delivered. Corruption has taken on a much more complex form and is much larger in scale. Grand corruption like the 2G scam and the Satyam scandal get into the purview of regulators such as the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and Comptroller and auditor general of India (CAG) among others. Recent RBI's investigations into NPA's of banks is a case in point.

The Congress Government faced electoral retribution for the corruption scandals in the 2014 parliamentary elections. From several reports, despite certain measures such

as the setting up of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) in 1964 to address governmental corruption, the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1988, the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informer (PIDPI) or the ‘Whistle Blower Resolution’ of 2004, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy or the Right to Information Act, 2005, or the establishment of hotlines by the Income Tax department and other government authorities, corruption is expected to remain more or less at the same level in the near future. This is mainly because bribe takers are often provided immunity by those in power or with influence. As such, the number of convictions under all these acts and regulations has been alarmingly low. It appears ironic that despite the assessments of domestic and international observers who identify an increasingly rampant form of corruption, and especially spectacular examples which involve parts of the political class, the number of cases registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) have been decreasing persistently over time (from 1,116 cases in 1990 to 731 cases in 2010). Being confronted with a lack of political will and institutional ineffectiveness, growing movements and activities from within India’s civil society are putting the government and politicians under increasing pressure to tackle the issue of corruption.

Corruption is not a consistent and invariant phenomenon in India; it has regional and sector-wise variation regarding its scope as well as its entrenchment within the state and society. With large scale corruption at very high quarters in politics increasingly coming to public attention, corruption-watching and corruption-hounding have become a national pre-occupation. The discourse around the Lok Pal Bill is one example of this sense of heightened alertness to shortcomings of Indian politics and home-grown remedies against this.

Lokpal bill³⁵

The Lokpal bill refers generally to an Indian anti-corruption bill that is supposed to empower an independent ombudsman or body to investigate corruption and to act against politicians and civil servants in alleged cases. After passing through the Lok Sabha during the Winter Session in 2011, the draft got stuck in the upper house during the whole of 2012. Subsequently, several observers identified the derailment of the process as a lack of will on the part of the political establishment to fight corruption in India. This led to frustration among civil society activists most prominently represented by Justice Santosh Hegde, a former Supreme Court Judge and former Lokayukta of Karnataka, Prashant Bhushan, a Supreme Court Lawyer, and Arvind Kejriwal, a Right to information (RTI) activist, who drafted the Jan Lokpal Bill, also called Citizen’s Ombudsman Bill. This bill attempts to address identified gaps in the ‘original draft’ version of Lokpal bill as introduced by the government authorities. After large-scale, anti-corruption movements in 2011 and 2012 under the leadership of Anna Hazare, the government started an amendment process of the drafted Lokpal bill. A major controversial issue was how far religious charitable societies and trusts bill could be the subject of vigilance activities of responsible state institutions based on the regulations implemented by the Lokpal. According to a recent decision of the Union Cabinet from February 2013, such religious bodies were to be exempted from the purview. The resolve to fight corruption at the macro-systemic level, while politically significant requires, nevertheless, a consequent empowerment at the level of the political actors who need both precise information on wrongdoing and juridical protection against vengeful victimisation in the hands of those caught red-handed. The former imperative has led to a major legislation by the way of the RTI Act.

Right to Information Act

After several grassroots campaigns by a variety of civil society groups such as journalists, activists, lawyers, academics, or retired civil servants, the RTI Act came into force on 12 October 2005 in India. This act is a much-amended version of the Freedom of Information Act which was enacted by the Indian Parliament in 2002 because of the harsh criticism it had to face at the time. However, the RTI Act aims to tackle fraud, mismanagement, and corruption at the central and local government levels. Therefore, this legislation provides “for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens” as well as leading to the establishment of the Central Information Commission (CIC) which is empowered to decide on complaints and appeals arising from use of this act. It gives each individual citizen the right to ask for reports and records under the act which must be provided by the public authority. Remarkably, this must be done within a certain time frame. In “normal cases” the information should be provided within 30 days, in cases of “matter of life and death”, the information should be provided within 48 hours. If the officials fail to deliver the requested information they will face serious punishment. The act covers the whole of India, except for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Information Act, 2009 is in force. Furthermore, several security and Central Intelligence and Security agencies are partly excluded from this act if it does not involve allegations of human rights violations and corruption. Certain information, particularly which affect national security, “strategic, scientific or economic” interests of India are excluded from the purview of the Act. Despite scepticism at the beginning, and especially an initial lack of awareness, the act is today perceived as a landmark legislation, which has helped bring in transparency and a kind of ‘institutional competition’ to improve governance in India.

Building an infrastructure for the twenty-first century

The problems and attempted solutions we have talked about above belong to the level of macro-systemic reform, institutional innovation and political initiatives with significant implications for everyday politics at the lower levels of the political system, such as regional governments and panchayat institutions at the local level. These institutional arrangements and the design of new synergy between the structure and process of Indian politics require a solid infrastructural base that provides a foot-hold to political institutions. However, compared to these modern institutional innovations, India’s infrastructure, mostly inherited from colonial rule sometimes comes across as archaic. In that sense, India’s infrastructure is yet another challenge to the policy maker. It is basically a remnant from the colonial days when roads and railway lines served security more than commercial interests. In the new global economy of which contemporary India aspires to be a part, this has emerged as a major obstacle to sustained growth. Now that the economy has shifted gear, the slow, clumsy roads, the airports and the handling of freight by rail and sea ports are utterly inadequate to the needs of the fast-moving and competitive twenty-first-century world. The same holds true for mass literacy, in which India still lags the industrial nations as well as China and most of the ‘tiger’ economic of East Asia. The intellectual back-up for India’s prowess in IT, biotechnology and medical research is provided by a few elite institutions such as the Indian Institution of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and the major metropolitan universities. Beyond these institutions, which cater to the educational needs of a small section of the

population, the infrastructure for mass literacy and skills transfer that emerging economy demands are sorely lacking. Under the federal division of powers, education is the responsibility of India's regional governments which makes coordination for mass education difficult to achieve at the national level. There are some indications that the governments at the federal and regional levels are responding³⁶ to this challenge. Similarly, the coordinated effort of the central government and the States to improve India's infrastructure is another indication of policy responsiveness to the imperative of coordinating the political process and infrastructure building to accelerate economic growth.³⁷ The current project to build a system of highways that would link India's major cities, started under the previous National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government was continued by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition, which ruled India from 2004 to 2014, indicates the salience that the government attaches to this issue.

Internal security to meet the challenge of global terror

Beyond the issues of infrastructure, there are basic problems of the protection of life, liberty and property of individuals from external and internal threats that are essential functions of government. The threat to internal security has emerged as a major source of challenge to public policy making in India. A corollary to this is the entanglement of Indo-Pakistan rivalry with internal security, and its potential enlargement that could draw in nuclear weapons. This remains a source of great anxiety and enhances the vigilance of international agencies over internal security. These security concerns adversely affect the flow of capital, investment and trade. Efforts by the leaders of both India and Pakistan to contain terrorism and accelerate the growth of trade, communication and development, have often floundered on the issue of the unsolved Kashmir conflict.³⁸ That said, initiatives such as the 'Composite Dialogue'³⁹ and other 'back-channel initiatives'—a peculiarity of Indo-Pak diplomacy, carried out through non-conventional means—have helped continue negotiations beyond the glare of television cameras and the fiery rhetoric that marks the public relationship between the two neighbours. The result has been a decline in the probability of war though the 'no-war-no-peace' relationship remains mired in firing across the ill-defined frontiers, cross-border terrorism and local skirmishes between regular troops.

The international media geared up for an arms race and the intensification of conflict in South Asia, following the nuclear tests of 1998. But contrary to such apprehensions, soon after the tests, India and Pakistan started a series of negotiations and set up confidence-building measures (CBMs). The assumption that the introduction of nuclear deterrence would lower tensions along the Kashmir border was short lived. The outbreak of armed conflict in the Kargil district of Kashmir in 1999, and the build-up of more than a million Indian and Pakistani troops along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir following the terrorist attack on the Parliament in 2001. However, while the terrorist attack of 2008 on the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Mumbai,⁴⁰ the Trident Oberoi Hotel, the Jewish Chabad Center/Nariman House and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, again heightened international fears of yet another Indo-Pakistani confrontation, this time with the possible use of nuclear weapons. However, the subsequent resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan belied this pessimistic prognosis.

The political message one gets from the coexistence of terrorist attacks and a vibrant democracy is that of the two faces of India. Democracy prevails, but terror lurks in the background. Terrorists (who describe themselves as freedom fighters or *Mujahideens*) are

supported by their sympathizers in Pakistan and Afghanistan and have significant local support in India from which they get vital supplies and information. This cross-border terrorist linkage has emerged as an additional irritant to Indo-Pak relations. Contrary to Indian arguments, particularly regarding cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, Pakistan, for reasons of both solidarity and tactical advantage, claims that the terrorists are freedom fighters—Azadis seeking to liberate Kashmir from Indian rule. The continued strife in Kashmir, a legacy of the unresolved issues of India's Partition and the contradictory ideologies about the role of religion espoused by India and Pakistan in the years that followed is a complex issue that needs to be understood in its historical context.⁴¹

India's Kashmir policy, indicative of the incomplete character of India's national and territorial integration, has a complex genealogy and is a subject of endless debates in the press and in scholarly accounts. However, some of these challenges have helped quicken the pace of national integration and democratic consolidation. The state of Emergency of 1975–77 (see Chapter 4), during which India's democratic process was held in abeyance, has become a distant memory but still serves to unite people in the defence of democratic rights when things appear to get out of hand. Hindu nationalism, which came to prominence as a major political force in the 1980s, has now acquired a legitimate presence within the political spectrum. The venerable Indian National Congress (INC), no longer the hegemonic party which it once was, has learnt to play the game of coalition building and maintenance, creating a reasonably stable political environment with two broad-based centre-left and centre-right coalitions competing against one another (Chapter 6).⁴² Finally, the label of regionalism no longer evokes the fear of Balkanization that was so characteristic of the politics of the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, one finds large, well-organized regional parties comfortably coalescing with all-India parties at the national level and competing against them in the regional arena.⁴³

The Indian response: resilience of democracy and governance

The policy challenges discussed above, involving governments at the federal, regional and local levels, against the backdrop of India's democratic political system, free media and politically assertive citizenry, create a dense political field. The way India copes with this challenge has some distinctive features.

The record of high governance registered a sharp decline in the 1980s. But this decline did not become terminal and was reversed steadily after reaching the peak in 1985 (see Figure 1.2). The level of orderly rule varies widely across regional States. But even in low performing States, democratic governance and accountability have been achieved, and no part of India has seceded from the country since Independence. In the past, India's political resilience used to generate wide interest and lengthy debate.⁴⁴ Selig Harrison's early warning of impending chaos in India, *The Most Dangerous Decades* (1965), had found a contrasting prognosis in Rajni Kothari's *Politics in India* (1970) and Morris-Jones's *Government and Politics in India* (1987), both of which have provided succinct explanations of the resilience of India's political institutions. The continuity of the main institutions of the Constitution of 1950 and India's territorial integrity during the decades following Independence bear this out.⁴⁵

The resilience of the Indian state and its attempts to generate a level playing field have accelerated the pace and durability of India's democracy.⁴⁶ In contrast to the spate of recent travelogues that dwell on factors that make India exceptional,⁴⁷ this book focuses on the state and the political process that underpin it. It explains the intricacies of India's

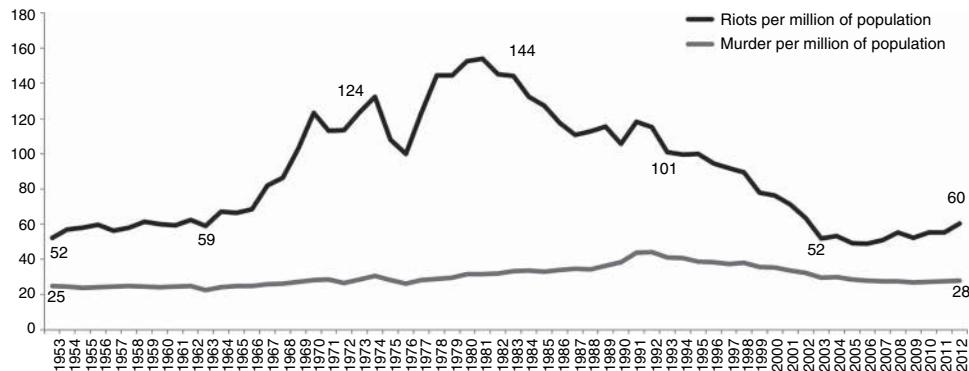


Figure 1.2 Riots and murder in India (1953–2012).

Data Source: Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, National Crime Records Bureau, Crime in India, various years.

multiple political arenas by focusing on the political choices and strategies of India's elites and the vast electorate as they cope with factors such as caste, religious conflict and natural catastrophe that are symbolic of India's presumed uniqueness. Crucial to this story are India's new political elites emerging from the lower social orders who, unlike old-style social notables whom they have increasingly replaced, act as binding factors between tradition and modernity. They link the diverse and continental dimensions of India's political system together into a functional and cohesive whole.

Towards a level playing field: multiple roles of the State in India

Though enthusiasm for bureaucratic planning has considerably waned since 1991 and the state no longer has exclusive control over the 'commanding heights of the economy',⁴⁸ the influential role of the government continues to be a part of everyday life all over India.⁴⁹ The ubiquitous *sarkar*—government as traditionally referred to in rural India—represents the power of the state, symbolized by towering public buildings, spacious colonial bungalows where ministers and high civil servants reside, and dusty offices in small towns and villages. Civil servants still preside over prize-giving ceremonies in village schools, allocate agricultural subsidies, maintain the safe conduct of the polls, and keep order in religious festivals. Many of the outer symbols of their authority that are colonial in origin remain intact. The omnipresent peon wearing the uniform designed by the 'British Raj' is still in evidence in some district towns. The crucial difference between the colonial world and India today, however, lies in the perception of authority by the public. Whereas the British civil servant on horseback was the symbol of the omnipotent, distant, incorruptible, neutral Raj, their post-Independence descendants are part of the outer fringe of India's politics, charged with the task of delivering the goods and services that citizens can ultimately expect from 'their' government and open to manipulation by political leaders. This realization, even as it contradicts the norms of rational administration, has immensely contributed to the agency of ordinary people. The survey findings discussed in Chapter 3 show a growing sense of efficacy and entitlement on the part of the citizens of this vast, multi-national country.

The state in India comes across simultaneously as neutral and partisan between competing social interests, and, in practice, can take many different forms, identifying itself with different interest groups.⁵⁰ At the centre of its institutional structure, one can find a constant evocation of the traditional paternalism of the pre-modern Indian state. Beyond that is the usual paraphernalia of the liberal state, committed to the dignity of man, and more recently, to the advocacy of the freedom of individual enterprise from bureaucratic meddling. The core institutions of the state also embody the tradition of European social democracy in terms of a commitment to social justice. Finally, there is also the spectre of the occasional breakdown of the liberal superstructure, and the abuse of the authority of the state for personal benefit.⁵¹

Creating a level playing field is the quintessence of the ideology of the post-colonial state in India. In their characterization of the state in India, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph show how it has successfully incorporated some apparently contradictory values to create a space where different social groups can enhance their status by periodically renegotiating the priorities for the politics of the day.⁵² The ‘negotiation’ itself takes many different forms—, stretching from participating in elections to mass uprisings and political violence. These political transactions take place under the watchful eyes of the public, the media, politicians and civil servants. In their imitable metaphor, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph describe the Indian state in terms of ‘Hindu conceptions of the divine’, ‘polymorphous’, and ‘a creature of manifold forms and orientations’. The state shuttles between contradictory roles of being a neutral referee between competing social groups, and occasionally becomes partisan—, leaning in favour of political groups in the name of positive discrimination, secularism, democratic rights, or dominant local or regional power.⁵³ In extreme cases of conflict or secessionist movements, the state takes an active and forceful initiative and responds to challenges with a mixed strategy that combines both repression and accommodation.⁵⁴ In their attempts to get the best deal, both leaders and followers mobilize their social networks, transform traditional customs and innovate new political norms. The consequent musings, tactics, anger, aspirations and anxiety—or spells of sullen silence from leaders and followers—are significant for the understanding of politics and governance in India.

Eternal, enduring and changing India: re-use, hybridity and endogenous modernity

Over the recent past, particularly since the nuclear tests of 1998, the emergence of India as the world’s ‘back office’—and more recently, a much-publicized gang rape in Delhi, the national capital—the international perception of India has changed significantly. The new image of India as the country of ‘the bomb and Bangalore’ has begun to challenge the stock representation of India as the epitome of backwardness, or spirituality and otherworldliness. In stark contrast to India’s earlier obsession with *swadeshi*—the politics of import substitution and diplomatic isolation—contemporary India is an avid buyer of fuel, weapons, military aircraft, foreign firms, brand-name goods and luxury products. To the leaders of Western business and industry, and to the movers and shakers of world politics, India is a lucrative market and a powerful and ambivalent presence, holding up a basket of assets such as her vast, trained, cost-effective, manpower skilled at business processing, top Indian companies specializing in capital-intensive manufacturing and information technology.

In view of India's 'traditional society' and modern democratic institutions many see India as unique and attribute the success of democratic institutions to her 'exceptionalism'. In contrast to these Orientalist or nationalist arguments, the book suggests that while the cluster of factors that explain the stability of India's modern political institutions is quite atypical,⁵⁵ the factors themselves are not. The book analyses these culturally specific and historically contingent factors that have made this remarkable phenomenon of post-colonial democracy possible. They are understood as the consequence of both competition for power and social mobility under the aegis of a modern, liberal state.

The effective functioning of India's liberal constitution in a traditional, illiberal setting is puzzling.⁵⁶ The innovative early research of Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph which showed how traditional institutions like the caste network can be mobilized for modern politics such as elections, party building and lobbying has helped open up new areas of inquiry.⁵⁷ This has helped explain how India's modern institutions have emerged from a traditional culture, and how they carry the traces of their 'birthmarks' in the form of traditional symbols ensconced within modern structures. The result of strategic re-use of traditional networks for modern functions and the adaptation of traditional symbols for modern politics help explain the origin of an authentic, endogenous modernity in India.⁵⁸

Competition for power as the cutting edge of India's political culture

The competition for power under the aegis of a democratic state and countervailing forces representing competing interests, jointly ensconced in power, creates a greater room for manoeuvre for weak or marginal social groups. This challenges more dominant and established forces, and, has led to the transformation of a traditional society to a modern design. The approach taken in this book draws on India's political dynamism to question the essential, hierarchical and static worldviews that have long held sway in the European imagination of India. I argue in this book that India is no more unique or special than any other major country with a classical culture, long historical evolution and religious beliefs deeply anchored in society. If India has succeeded in establishing a sustainable democratic process, it is because an unusual set of factors has come together to create a political environment that has made stakeholders out of ordinary people.⁵⁹ The competition for power—an ineluctable fact of organized life—has neatly dovetailed into the interstices of Indian society. Keeping in tune with the changing social structure is the political system whose outer reaches occasionally spill over from conventional politics into anti-system behaviour. But the manner of its happening reinforces the strength and efficacy of the political process. Incredible as it may sound, the legitimacy of the post-colonial state in India issues from the struggle for power in the everyday life of Indian politics.⁶⁰ This point is crucial and needs to be explained at length because it can be missed easily.⁶¹

For those unfamiliar with the country, the proposition that competition for power is the key to understanding Indian society might sit uncomfortably with the 'idea of India' as imagined by generations of European philosophers, writers and painters. The country of Buddha, Gandhi and Nehru, India has long enjoyed international recognition as an abode of peace, spirituality, harmony and the abnegation of material riches. The single-minded focus on political power that underpins this book is quite likely to raise doubts, particularly in the minds of those who are unfamiliar with the vibrancy

of India's local politics.⁶² Popular images of India as a spiritual society rather than one based on material interests and power has been formed by the dominance of cultural and religious motifs.⁶³ A steady stream of theoretical contributions to Indian politics questions this 'otherworldly image' of India⁶⁴ and argues that competition for power is the constant refrain of India's political life. The assertion, distribution and contestation of power and India's characteristic mix of institutional participation and rational protest give Indian politics its typical élan and explain the many paradoxes that underpin it. The great achievement of the post-Independence state has been to contain the struggle for power within limits defined by the Constitution and a watchful judiciary.

The competition for power has helped integrate new norms, radically affecting the equilibrium of power, that were introduced by the British during their efforts to keep the colony orderly and profitable (See Chapter 2). These norms of individual rights, equality before the law and representation were introduced into India to meet specific needs.⁶⁵ In retrospect, their side-effects have been enduring, making the secondary effect even more significant than the primary intentions. This 'cunning' of imperial reason,⁶⁶—an unintended consequence of imperial logic, made minority politics—built into separate electorates introduced as early as 1909, an integral part of India's electoral rules (see Chapter 2) and, judging by the impact of the political mobilization surrounding positive discrimination, a key factor in contemporary Indian politics.

Multiple and entangled modes of politics

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, despite its outwardly naive appearance India's 'style' of politics, which draws on symbols from culture and religion on the one hand, and modern political institutions and the market on the other, is both complex and sophisticated. After more than six decades of post-Independence politics based on democratic participation, protest movements, and accommodation within the framework of modern institutions, this mode of politics has come to characterize virtually all the arenas of the state. Building on the Gandhian legacy of the freedom struggle that had strategically combined participation in British institutions with a withdrawal of consent and civil disobedience, post-Independence innovation of new institutions and processes of participation, the Indian political actor has learnt how to combine modes of power, protest and participation to maximize impact on the policy process. There are numerous examples of this. Most ethno-nationalist movements attract media attention when they first appear with their customary fury, mass insurgency and military action, but eventually they find an institutional solution within the Indian political system (Chapter 5). And though continued political unrest in Kashmir continues to challenge this thesis, the case of Punjab in the 1990s and Tamil Nadu in the 1960s, both of which, after a spate of political turbulence have settled down to normal if noisy parliamentary politics, illustrate this mode of negotiated conflict resolution in India.

The strategic manoeuvre of India's politicians range between the peculiarly Indian, like *gherao*, *dharna*, *rasta roko*, *hartal*—various forms of individual and collective protest—and familiar forms of modern politics like electoral campaigns, lobbying and petitions. The book builds on these makers of modern India—civil servants, captains of business and industry, political leaders and their networks of agents and rebels—located in different regional and local contexts, for whom involvement with everyday politics has become a method of survival and an essential part of life. Very much in the tradition of the 'two-track politics' of Mahatma Gandhi in which he sought to combine

institutional participation with political protest, India's political actors combine both modern institutions and traditional forms of politics based on social networks. One consequence is the emergence of the state, both as the quintessential mediator between competing social forces, but crucially, the mentor of specific, underprivileged groups, promoting them from subject-hood to citizenship of the Indian Republic. Turbulent political 'activists', in the long run, become catalysts of social change, just as rebels become stakeholders.

The singularity of Politics in India

What, might an introductory text on politics of this vast country offer readers, to which, thanks to the information revolution of our times, they do not have access already? A possible answer to this question is that readers, deeply immersed in the minutiae of issues of everyday life, might lose sight of 'the forest for the trees' and fail to see the country in a comparative perspective. A formal, academic analysis, with empathy for the culture and historical context of the region, might help put the contradictory trends of Indian politics in a general context and connect events and people with one another. This helps assess the progress that India has made in some of the most challenging issues of post-colonial politics, such as governance, democracy, economic growth, welfare, and citizenship. There are four anchor points around which this larger picture can be constructed. These are, (1) the effects of democratisation on marginal and peripheral groups of people located outside mainstream politics, cities and large towns, and political institutions; (2) penetration of the interstices of society, and economic and social life that had so far remained relatively untouched by market forces; (3) global connectivity, particularly through the vast diaspora that reaches out to its social and religious networks; and, (4) the impact of modernization on culture and the traditional way of life.

The book has adopted *rational choice* as a heuristic device with which to understand the structures and processes of Indian politics. It presents India's leaders and their followers, elected officials and rebels, providers of patronage and supplicants, as rational actors who are driven by the single desire to gain power and influence the policy process. Like people anywhere in the world, they seek to avoid the worst possible outcome while aiming at the best and are prepared to settle down for what they consider acceptable while keeping a wary eye on the next opportunity. The use of rational choice as a conceptual tool does not suggest that there is a rational plan underpinning politics as we know, or even less, that there is a high rational plane from which elites can legislate the right course of action for lesser mortals to follow.⁶⁷

The use of rational choice as an analytical method is neither novel nor original.⁶⁸ In fact, anyone analysing American, French or British politics will not assume any more, or less, about culture or political behaviour than rationality as the basis of individual choice and institutional arrangements. The reason to make the use of this analytical method explicit in the Indian case is that Indian politics is often understood differently from politics in *more developed societies*. Most of the classical grand theories of development, imperialism and economic growth have drawn on India as a case in point. They understand Indian behaviour in terms of the *otherness* of Indian culture which is seen as holistic, spiritual, organic and hierarchical. In contrast, my approach is to analyse politics from 'below' and 'above' in terms of what those involved aim to achieve, and the social consequence of the strategies they adopt to reach their goals. The post-colonial state in India has been more successful than many others in achieving orderly rule, democracy,

legitimacy, welfare and citizenship because often India's leaders and bureaucrats have successfully guided people towards behaviour amenable to rules which are—thanks to democratic decentralization and accountability—increasingly ‘co-authored’ by the state and society.

Post-independence India was not a nation-state in the conventional sense, but a modern state seeking to constitute a nation out of a fragmented, traditional society. Not being a post-revolutionary state in the mould of China, with a fixed political agenda and a cadre based party charged with its implementation, India's leaders, working within a broadly socialist and democratic program of social change, have improvised as well as they could. In Europe, democracy was the ultimate reward for the fortunate survivors of the industrial, cultural and national revolutions that brought great misery to the minority or the socially marginal populations. India, wanting the same goals of economic growth, nation-building and national security, had to work in a national and international context that was vastly different. Pulverisation of difference in the name of a higher goal—which is the price that the poor, the minority and the marginal had paid for nation-building in Europe—is not acceptable to India's liberal constitution—nor to contemporary western democracies. India has, nevertheless, made a successful transition to democracy. The Indian ‘experiment’ is, therefore, crucial to the general theory of transition to democracy and its consolidation. The institutional arrangement of India discussed in detail in this book, the growth of regional autonomy, institutional space and India's federal arrangements function as a corrective force when the democratic equilibrium breaks down. The national emergency of 1975–77 which saw a temporary abrogation of democracy united a wide range of political forces for the defence of civil liberties. These groups—consisting of lawyers, journalists, academics, social workers, and political activists—became an important pressure group starting in the 1980s. Their presence and intervention have publicized the struggles of vulnerable social groups and exposed acts of administrative injustice and, in more extreme cases, state repression. This development has led to the emergence of a new social class of mediators in the political process, generally called “social activists.”⁶⁹

Beyond the conventional description of the structure and process of Indian politics, the book delves into issues of potential conflict between different segments of the policy process. How do contentious politics and the market economy affect one another? And how do economic diplomacy and the imperative of national security affect India's foreign policy? In some ways, the economic policies of 1991 to liberalize the economy and implement a policy of privatisation of public-sector undertakings went against the grain of Indian politics. As far as ancient Indian tradition goes, the *Arthashastra* had allocated several key sectors of the economy to the exclusive authority of the king.⁷⁰ This tradition of state monopoly was continued by practically all the rulers of India, coming to a peak under British colonial rule. Indian entrepreneurs were content after independence to find a secure *niche* within the structure of the mixed economy. Each obstacle to free enterprise was also the visible tip of a powerful vested interest. As such, it comes as no surprise that attempts to roll the state back have produced a powerful backlash from a formidable coalition: socialists who wanted to protect the poor and underprivileged from the ravages of capitalism, rich farmers who feared the loss of government subsidies, the *swadeshi* lobby which was apprehensive about the loss of Indian political autonomy and cultural identity, and regional leaders who feared the growing gap between rich and poor parts of India without the presence of a powerful, redistributive Union government. The efforts of the Government of India to introduce foreign direct investment

(FDI) in the multi-brand retail trade have been contested in terms of its potential threat to the livelihood of small traders and producers, and the infringement of the autonomy of regional governments. The dual objectives of growth and redistribution, articulated in terms of party competition, the politics of federalization and political movements will continue to underpin the structure and process of Indian politics.

In the process of close to seven decades of competitive politics, social mobility and democratic transition, India's institutions have held together and evolved, in response to changing times. The book documents some of the amendments to the original design, in citizenship, democracy, party building, federalism, and in general, the creation of a level playing field. It points out how modern institutions, strategic reform and policy processes have been enriched by India's political leaders, administrators, and rebels turned into stakeholders. This has been achieved not through dogma or conscious ideologies but through the sheer fact of engaging in everyday politics, sometimes with quixotic zeal, and innovating new methods when the path indicated by general theory trails off into the bush and one still must go on.

The scheme of chapters

The chapters have been arranged around issues that will be of interest to the students of both comparative politics and Indian area studies. The introductory chapter analyses how and with what success, the post-colonial state—a top-down system par excellence—has tried to live with borrowed categories, and transform them in the process of adapting them to local, regional and national needs. This tradition of the conflation of norms and innovation of new institutions had evolved, incrementally, in course of the conflict and collaboration of the British Raj and Indian resistance to it. The arrival of Independence and the introduction of competitive mass politics have accelerated the process.

Despite these positive aspects and sometimes, because of the functioning of modern institutions and technologies of mass communication, India's democratic system also has a dark side to it. Modern political institutions and processes have a propensity to break off into short-term and localized violence, and long-standing secessionist movements. However, such conflicts often reinforce the countervailing forces of region, caste, class and ideology that underpin the system. The book takes this into account and focuses on what the system must deliver to keep itself in business, i.e. replenish its political capital and legitimacy. The three related levels of Indian politics, namely structure, process and policy, and their entanglement are part of the ‘distinctive’ character of Indian politics—a political system in dynamic equilibrium—whose democratic character is the result of the ability of its political leaders of all ideological hues to conflate modern and traditional forms of politics and produce a uniquely Indian ‘style’ of politics.

Chapter 2 analyses the multiple pasts of modern Indian politics, focusing on how the embryonic ‘modern’ state—a British colonial outpost locked in uneasy coexistence with India’s indigenous rulers—eventually gained exclusive control over the entire Indian landmass and her coastal waters in a series of wars against Indian rulers and European rivals. The colonial state established order through a complex process of dominance and collaboration with its subjects and native princes and prolonged its rule through spasms of incremental devolution of power to the Indian population. When Independence came, as a final act of the Transfer of Power into Indian hands, the departing British left behind the bitter legacy of the Partition that has led to a series of inconclusive wars between India and Pakistan.

The diversity and complexity of the Indian population and its political culture, dominated by the ‘modernity of tradition’ and ‘multiple modes of politics’, are the main themes of Chapter 3. The chapter, following the method of other chapters in this book, lists the key events and legislations that have altered the composition of the political community and deeply affected the nature of the political transaction. The main components of Indian society, the castes and social classes, tribes, religions, gender, languages, the geography and political culture, are analysed later in the book based on the key facts and narratives.

India’s institutional arrangement, which has introduced an effective and characteristic form of checks and balances, combining strength with democracy, is the core theme of Chapter 4. The main components of the government, namely, the executive, legislative and judicial wings, are introduced and discussed based on their constitutional organization and political evolution. The structure and function of the bureaucracy, some key national commissions, non-governmental organizations, urban and rural governance and the police and the military—the main organs of internal and external security—are discussed here. Another key feature is the National Emergency of 1975, and its disputed legacy in terms of the 42nd and the 44th amendments. This is discussed in terms of the analysis of the resilience of India’s democracy, in subsequent chapters of the book.

Federalism, or rather Union-State relations, as they are called in India, comes in for a detailed discussion in Chapter 5. The 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution (1993), recognizing the village as an arena and *panchayats* as the third tier of the Indian federation, is introduced in this chapter. The chapter highlights some key events and major legislative acts such as the States Reorganization Act (1956). The resilience of the federal division of powers is discussed in terms of its ability to balance self-rule and shared rule, and to ensure both the unity of the nation and diversity of the society in India. The federal levels such as the States, sub-states, Union Territories, special districts, local administration and special features such as Article 371a for Nagaland, the anomalous status of Kashmir (Art. 370), are brought in to emphasize the distinct character of India’s federalism. Other distinguishing features such as fiscal federalism, the impact of liberalization and globalization on the federal division of powers, and the new trend of political interlocking, inter-jurisdictional rather than inter-state interactions, are also introduced here.

The process aspects of Indian politics, namely, the articulation, aggregation and marginalization of interests, are discussed in Chapter 6. Key events and legislations like the Representation of People Act (1951), and reservations that have changed the course of politics are introduced here. The main structural components of the political process, such as elections—to central, regional, local bodies, and public bodies of a semi-official character—recruitment of civil servants, the twin principles of merit and representation through India’s modified quota system, are discussed. The party system and major political parties—Congress, BJP, regional parties—trade unions, social and political ‘protest’ movements, pressure groups, and lobbies are analysed. Finally, ‘communalism’, the violent politics of inter-community conflict that simultaneously quickens the pace of the political process and registers its breakdown, concludes this chapter.

Chapter 7 discusses the economy, welfare and the politics of poverty reduction in India. Key events and legislations, such as the two industrial Acts from the 1950s, and liberalization legislation from the 1990s, are introduced. The main ethos of India’s political economy, namely the politics of incremental growth and redistribution, planning the mixed economy, the green revolution, poverty and peasant radicalism,

liberalization, the IT industry, globalization and ‘swadeshi’ economics are analyzed to show the complexity of India’s political economy.

The core elements of Chapter 8 consist of India’s propensity to simultaneously engage the world while appearing to stay aloof from international politics—a typical feature of Nehru’s non-alignment—and the ambiguities of recent Indian foreign policy regarding nuclear weapons. Its key focus is the discussion of foreign policy as an integral element of nation-building in India. Main events, such as the three Kashmir wars, the Indo-China border war and the Indian ‘peaceful’ intervention in Sri Lanka (1987), are introduced to illustrate the distinct character of India’s foreign policy as it oscillates between national interest and national ideals. Current Indian manoeuvres at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the tactical engagement with China, and the spate of strategic ‘partnerships’ that India has embarked on are analysed to indicate India’s transition from non-alignment to engagement. The growing links between trade and foreign policy between India and the European Union (EU) are highlighted to indicate a steady shift of Indian policy, from protectionism to wider, international commitments. Finally, the domestic roots of India’s foreign policy, as seen in the fissures that the Indo-US Framework Agreement produced, between the ruling coalition and its communist allies, are discussed to explain the apparently contradictory features of India’s foreign policy.

Chapter 9 provides a brief résumé of the state of Indian democracy, still solid but fraying at the edges, and explains why the myth of territorial integrity is so vital for India. Instead of treating India’s democracy as exceptional, the chapter presents some deeper factors such as legitimacy, trust, and efficacy—collectively referred to as India’s ‘political capital’—which are some general conditions that account for the success of India’s democracy. These attitudinal variables are, in turn, the results of strategic social and economic reform and deft maintenance of order and accountability. The chapter concludes with an invocation of the limitations to the Indian model and some policy recommendations such as enhancing political capital and trust, institution-building, reinforcing India’s countervailing forces, indigenous modernity and the taking of popular categories seriously as being crucial to India’s continued growth and legitimacy in the twenty-first century.

Finally, Chapter 10, concludes *Politics in India* with a focus on India in the twenty-first century, the challenges the country faces, and opportunities that it might miss. The economy—how to sustain growth, and redistribute money to the poor without eroding the incentive to work and earn profits—is presented as part of the worldwide problem that neo-liberal reforms face in developing countries at the threshold of a breakthrough into self-sustaining growth. Other specific problems of the Indian economy such as energy—balancing need and capacity through exploration, alliance and the price mechanism—and the environment, where India must acquire the necessary skills to cope with the regular wear and tear of a fast-growing economy and with natural catastrophes. The problems of infrastructure, transport, communication, education and health are highlighted as those where urgent and sustained attention is indispensable to maintain the pace of development. Main political challenges such as citizenship—making subjects and ‘minorities’ into citizens—and violent challenges to order, such as cross-border terrorism, and the ‘Naxalites’ are discussed as necessary adjuncts to India’s political economy. The challenges and promises of globalization, the Indian ‘Diaspora’, corruption, crime and other aspects of governance and the question of identity are analysed as integral parts of Indian modernity and secularism in the 21st century.

Conclusion

As the world's second most populous country, an emerging economy and a resilient democracy, politics in India commands general attention. In addition, for specialists, the Indian case brings new perspectives into the cross-national comparison of citizenship, governance, development, transition to democracy and its consolidation. It also raises questions of general significance. Can India balance growth and social justice, keep inflation down, build up her infrastructure, invest in public services, and sustain the pace of economic growth? With its Hindu majority, will Indian democracy steadily acquire a 'saffron tinge' and marginalize its religious minorities? Will a nuclear-powered India, an international outlaw for some, be a danger to the country itself, and to international stability, or will it become a balancing factor and a bastion of stability acting as a fulcrum of a multi-polar world, balancing China and the United States?

There are no simple answers to these complex questions. Keeping to the character of the book as an introductory text, the analysis highlights these issues while keeping to the well-lit main street of the complex politics of the country, and leaving out the darker alleys so dear to the specialist. However, these theoretical and comparative issues are signposted, and, illustrated with images of real life, facts from India's vibrant print media, village studies and survey research. Additional supplementary reading for those wishing to delve deeper into the more intricate and cutting-edge issues is provided separately at the end of the book.

Instead of looking towards the uniqueness of India's culture and religion to search for an explanation to the puzzles of Indian politics, the book builds on general assumptions about politics, the agency of India's political leaders and the aspirations of their followers. It dissects the antics of India's political leaders to show how they combine modern and indigenous forms of political action and contribute to the dynamism of Indian politics. The chapters that follow present a fragment of this rich discourse in response to the questions addressed to the puzzling resilience of democracy, the buoyancy of the economy, the persistence of poverty and the endemic ambiguity of India's foreign policy. The next chapter opens the inquiry with an incursion into the pre-modern pasts of modern politics in India, with a detailed focus on British colonial rule.

Notes

- 1 In fact, India combines one of the lowest levels of per capita income with one of the lowest levels of murder. India has a murder rate of 3.4 per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 3.2 for Germany. However, regarding other indicators of crime, India has 5.8 sexual offences, 25.2 serious assault, 35.1 theft, 5.75 fraud, 0.1 counterfeit currency and 2.4 drug offences, compared to, respectively, 65.3, 154.0, 3819.8, 1124.3, 7.0 and 304.4 for similar crimes in Germany. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs 2004: 21.
- 2 For details of comparative data on India and a selection of developed and developing countries, refer to Powell et al. (2012).
- 3 The Freedom House (Berlin) rankings put India at 2 and China at 7 on political rights, India at 3 and China at 6 on social rights (1 is the highest), and India at 6.7 and China at 5.7 on economic freedom (10 is highest). Many consider the future of the Chinese political system uncertain in contrast to the long-term stability of the Indian political system (Powell et al. 2012).
- 4 For a ring side view of India's eventful decade, 2004–14, see Ravi Veloor, *India Rising: Fresh Hopes, New Fears* (Singapore: Straits Times Press; 2016).

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- 5 The concept, often used in Indian politics, indicates the glacial pace at which Hinduism changes. This expression was meant to imply the slow and incremental rate of the annual net growth of about 1.5 percent during the first four decades after Independence.
- 6 ‘Exactly when India’s economy started to break free of the ‘Hindu rate of growth’ remains an issue of some controversy. The growth trajectory changed in the 1980s. Baldev Nayar gives 1975 as the beginning of turnaround politics, and so do I. That growth trajectory got consolidated after 1991’. Rahul Mukherji, personal communication, May 17, 2016. Also see Wallach, EPW 38(41), 2003 and Nayar, EPW 41(19), 2006.
- 7 The exact extent of poverty reduction remains a matter of controversy. See Chapter 7.
- 8 As a matter of fact, these global critics might even have produced an opportunity for the country to tackle the problem of its infrastructure. The combination of deft macroeconomic management by the Reserve Bank of India, a stimulus package consisting of a long-awaited pay hike for India’s civil servants, and the construction boom have helped cushion the impact of the world financial crisis on India. The Economist reports: ‘Now that India’s economy is slowing and competition for men, materials and money is slackening, India’s public infrastructure may have a chance to catch up. In Gurgaon the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation is building an elevated railway that will connect the upstart city to the capital. It is a public project backed up by the governments of India, Delhi and the neighbouring State. It is also the busiest construction site in the city’ (The Economist, March 1st, 2009: 71). For the past year, the economy has picked up momentum again, averaging a growth rate of 7.5%, outpacing that of China. Of course, the Chinese economy performs from a much larger base; still, the fact that India is notching 7.5% compared to China’s 6% is a source of great psychological boost for investors and stakeholders.
- 9 The pitched battles between the police, hoodlums and peasants in Nandigram, West Bengal, during most of the year 2008, is one such incident where, beyond the actual breakdown of law and order, one can see the long-term strategic calculations of the ruling Left Front coalition and the parties opposed to it, as well as competition among coalition partners themselves, with the dominant CPM struggling to defend its political base and the partners trying to expand theirs, at the cost of their ally. This has not, however, prevented the holding of parliamentary elections. For the general argument regarding how Indian politics accommodates discontent, see Mitra and Singh (2009).
- 10 Stakeholders are people who consider themselves efficacious and who hold the system to be legitimate. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of survey findings about these variables. For a measurement of citizenship in India, see Mitra (2010).
- 11 See Chapter 8 and Cohen (2001: 2).
- 12 See *Political map of India* (2015), General Wall Maps, Survey of India, www.surveyofindia.gov.in/pages/display/119-general-wall-maps for the political map of India, showing parts of Kashmir that India claims to be currently under Pakistani and Chinese occupation.
- 13 According to the 2011 census of India, 68.84% of Indians (around 833.1 million people) live in 640,867 different villages. The size of these villages varies considerably. 236,004 Indian villages have a population of fewer than 500, while 3,976 villages have a population of over 10,000. The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, undertaken in 1993, transferred some financial and legislative power to the panchayats—directly elected village councils—and requires that one-third of the seats be reserved for women.
- 14 The book subscribes to the following definition of a system. ‘The political system is a set of institutions and agencies concerned with formulating and implementing the collective goals of a society or of groups within it’ (Powell et al. 2012).
- 15 This definition is more inclusive than the definition of structure in Powell et al. 2012 who see it merely as ‘specialized agencies of the government’ such as ‘parliament, bureaucracies, administrative agencies and courts’ (*ibid.*: 31). In India, structures, as Powell et al. suggest, perform functions which enable the government to formulate, implement and enforce its policies. However, some structures which do not formally belong to the government—such as national commissions, some members of the media, and exceptionally, members of the parliament not belonging to the ruling party or coalition—might also influence policy.
- 16 Powell et al. 2012.
- 17 These are: (i) distribution—of money, goods, and services—to citizens, residents and clients of the state; (ii) extraction of resources—money, goods, persons and services—from the

- domestic and international environments; (iii) regulation of human behaviour—the use of compulsion and inducement to bring about desired behaviour; and (iv) symbolic outputs—political speeches, holidays, rites, public monuments and statues, and the like—used to exhort citizens to engage in desired forms of behaviour, build community, or celebrate exemplary conduct' (Mitra 2012: Chapter 17: p. 568).
- 18 Those interested in theories of political resilience and discontinuities should refer to North (1991), March and Olsen (1996), Bates et al. (1998), who supplement the functionalist concepts of structure and function with other variables such as risk, chance and institutional memory. For an application of these factors to an analysis of democracy and governance in India, see Mitra (2005).
 - 19 Das (2000), Luce (2006), Tharoor (1997), Varma (2004) are exemplary of this genre.
 - 20 Refer to 'Flawed paradigms', Mitra (1999).
 - 21 Austin (1966), Brown (1985), Hardgrave and Kochanek (2008), Ganguly and de Votta (2003), Thakur (1995) are some leading titles.
 - 22 Though often the staple of journalists in search of a coup, the 'otherness' of India has a respectable scholarly genealogy. The complexity and diversity of India's politics, the dexterity of her politicians, the seeming timelessness of the myths underpinning political rhetoric and in some cases, practice, have given rise to this genre that Edward Said has described as 'Orientalism'. For those using this line of reasoning, India defies western categories of historical and political analysis.
 - 23 See Dumont (1970). Quigly (1993) provides a resume of the debate around Dumont's contribution.
 - 24 Palme, Dutt and Bettelheim were representative of the earlier generation; Brass (1992), Frankel and Rao (1989/90), Moore (1966), Vanaik (1990) provide shades of the more recent contributions to this field.
 - 25 I have called this the 'neo-institutional, dynamic, rational choice' approach in *The Puzzle of India's Governance* Mitra (2005).
 - 26 Rationality is used to imply both 'instrumental' and 'value' rationality as defined by Max Weber. For a sophisticated analysis of the concept of rationality in general and rationality of the pre-modern man, see, 'Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History', by Stephen Kalberg, in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 85, No. 5 (Mar. 1980), pp. 1145–79.
 - 27 For an illustration of the structure, functions and social origin of such elites at the local level—the *gaon ka neta* (village leaders)—see Mitra (1991a).
 - 28 The availability of free, fair and effective elections based on universal adult franchise is crucial for this.
 - 29 See Mitra and Singh (2009).
 - 30 See Mitra et al. 2006: 397. For a definition of this key term and others used in this book, the glossary at the beginning of this book is a source of further information.
 - 31 Quotas produce clienteles and vested interests that seek to freeze social justice at a particular level. The dynamics of Indian politics can be seen in the fact that the process of challenging the system of reservations—of jobs, seats in legislatures and admission to educational institutions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes—has already set in. See Kumar 2009.
 - 32 According to World Bank data derived based on the Indian National Poverty Line (2006).
 - 33 Measured in terms of population below \$2 per day (2011), India's 59.2 percent compares unfavourably to Brazil's 8.2 percent, China's 18.6 percent, Iran's 18.7 percent, Mexico's 4.1 percent and Russia's 11 percent. India's dismal record is surpassed only by Nigeria's 70 percent. World Bank, World Development Indicators 2011 & www.cia.gov.
 - 34 www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results.
 - 35 Please refer to the following for details.
 - www.firstpost.com/politics/parliamentary-panel-on-lokpal-bill-will-miss-25-march-deadline-seeks-more-time-2167161.html
 - www.ndtv.com/india-news/will-believe-in-delhi-government-after-lokpal-bill-is-passed-says-aaps-n-dilip-kumar-768517
 - Forbes has an interesting piece on how the cost of the bill has increased over time
<http://forbesindia.com/graphics/special/cost-of-the-lokpal-bill/27462>
 - 36 The government has called for \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending in the five years through 2017. The priorities include three airports, two ports, an elevated rail-corridor in Mumbai,

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- and almost 6,000 miles of new roads. The Ministry of Road Transport outlined plans for \$120 billion worth of road-widening projects, with 65% of this money targeted to come from the private sector. There are also plans for \$60 billion to be invested in India's ports by 2020. The Indian Planning Commission has estimated that the country will need 180 additional airports in the next decade. And the government has set ambitious goals for wind, solar and nuclear energy, all of which will be needed to supplement power from coal and gas. www.pwc.com/gx/en/capital-projects-infrastructure/assets/gridlines-india-article-2013.pdf
- www.kpmg.com/Global/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/foresight-28.pdf
- www.dnb.co.in/India2020economyoutlook/growth_drivers.asp
- 37 See www.dnb.co.in/India2020economyoutlook/growth_drivers.asp; Accessed on 31st July 2016.
- Substantial investments in physical, growth drivers social and agricultural infrastructure were identified as the key growth drivers for the Indian economy to set on a high and sustainable growth path. India has already taken several initiatives for e.g.: more than 78,000 MW of additional power generation capacity has been planned, issue of Rs. 300 bn tax free bond to develop overall infrastructure including Rs. 100 bn to NHAI, key developments in the education sector with major focus on skill development and so on.
- 38 See Mitra 2001a: 361–79 and Subrata Mitra and Radu Carciuamaru, “Beyond the ‘Low Level Equilibrium Trap’: Getting to a Principled Negotiation of the Kashmir Conflict”, in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 26 (2015), 1–24.
- 39 The Composite Dialogue Process dates back to May 1997, when at Male, the Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif mooted the idea of a structured dialogue to be called the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP). The process enabled the two countries to discuss all issues including Jammu and Kashmir, simultaneously. Despite many ups and downs, since April 2003 the dialogue progressed steadily till November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks when it was suspended. The main intention behind the Composite Dialogue was to conceptualise India-Pakistan relations in terms of “eight baskets of issues namely, Peace and Security including confidence building measures (CBMs); Jammu and Kashmir (J&K); Siachen; Wular Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project; Sir Creek; Economic and Commercial Cooperation; Terrorism and Drug Trafficking; and, Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields.” See “The Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan: Structure, Process and Agency” by Sajad Padder, *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Studies*, (Heidelberg), no. 65 (2012). The Composite Dialogue was revived in 2011 in the form of the ‘Resumed Dialogue’.
- 40 See Frontline, 25 (25), 6–19 December, 2008. For Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Mumbai, site of the terrorist attack on 26 November, 2008.
- 41 See Mitra 2001a: 361–79 and Subrata Mitra and Radu Carciuamaru, “Beyond the ‘Low Level Equilibrium Trap’: Getting to a Principled Negotiation of the Kashmir Conflict”, in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol 26 (2015), 1–24.
- 42 However, the 2014 Parliamentary elections which reduced the strength of the Indian National Congress in the Lok Sabha radically, to the point where it did not even have enough seats to be declared as the official opposition, has upset the broadly consensual character of India’s parliamentary party system, resulting in stormy sessions, systematic interruptions as a form of protest and parliamentary paralysis. See, Chapter 6.
- 43 Thus, the Communist Party of India (CPM) has been a supporter of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-led government in Delhi (2004–9), but that did not prevent the CPM and the Congress being rivals in West Bengal. In terms of the sophisticated political bargaining that this form of cohabitation involves, Indian politics is comparable to similar support-splitting in French and German politics. See Chapters 4 and 6 for details of how competition and collaboration take place at the regional and national arenas between political parties.
- 44 In the voluminous literature that has grown around governance, one notices more a pendulum-like mood swing between optimism and pessimism regarding the state of governance, reflecting the political reality of the day, than the cumulating of analytical rigour and methodological precision. The tendency in some recent studies is to lean towards a

- pessimistic prognosis (Brass 2003). In contrast to his earlier prognosis (Kohli 1990), Kohli's *The Success of India's Democracy* (2001) endorses the achievements of India's institutional arrangements.
- 45 The impression of impending chaos that one gets from Kohli's early work on the crisis of governability in India (especially Kohli 1990) had the turbulent 1980s in its background. Kohli referred to this period as 'deinstitutionalization' which saw the rise of terrorism in Punjab, insurgency in Kashmir and Assam and challenges to the modern secular state from religious fanatics. This trend found an echo in his forecast of increasing disorder. However, the predictions have not come true, as seen in Diagram 1.1. In contrast to prediction (indicated by the broken lines), the real incidences of riots in India have, on the average, come down after the peak of the mid-1980s. See Mitra 2005.
- 46 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987) refer to this as 'state dominated pluralism'.
- 47 Luce (2006).
- 48 An epithet applied to the pyramidal structure of planning where the state, located at the peak, had the overview of the whole society and the economy. See Chapter 6.
- 49 For the levelling role of the state which seeks to equalize opportunities, see Mitra (2008).
- 50 See Rudolph and Rudolph, 1989, pp. 401–2.
- 51 Tilly (1985) has described this generally as 'organized criminality'.
- 52 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987: 400–1).
- 53 See Kohli (1990, 2001) and Mitra (2005) for an analysis of loss and recovery of order. The role of the state as a dispenser of social justice is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.
- 54 Stephen Cohen, an American specialist of India's defence and security policy, quotes a senior member of the Indian Police Service (IPS) to explain Indian strategy regarding secessionist movements as 'hit them hard over the head with a hammer and then teach them how to play the piano!' (Cohen 2001: 112). For a complementary argument, see Louise Tillin, "Questioning Borders: Social Movements, Political Parties and the Creation of New States in India" in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (March 2011), pp. 67–87.
- 55 Luce (2006).
- 56 See, Subrata K. Mitra (2013) 'Liberal Politics in an Illiberal Context'.
- 57 See Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *The Modernity of tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; 1984). Stressing the variations in meaning of modernity and tradition, they have shown in this work how in India traditional structures and norms have been adapted or transformed to serve the needs of a modernizing society. They have followed up their early work in numerous other publications, including *The Pursuit of Lakshmi:[B] The political economy of the Indian state* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press; 1987). They have shown how Lakshmi, the fickle goddess of prosperity and good fortune, is a metaphor for the aspirations of the modern state and entrepreneurs of modern India.
- 58 I have analysed the role of traditional local leaders (gaon ka neta) in bridging the gap between the modern state and traditional society in my 'Room to Manoeuvre in the Middle', World Politics, and elaborated this interaction and the conflation of modern and traditional norms in my *Culture and Rationality* (Delhi: Sage; 1999). The concept of re-use and hybridity have been further discussed in my *Re-use: The Art and Science of Integration and Anxiety* (Delhi: Sage; 2008) and *Kautilya's Arthashastra: An Intellectual Portrait* (Baden Baden: NOMOS; 2016).
- 59 Mitra and Singh, *When Rebels become Stakeholders* (2009).
- 60 See the evidence of efficacy and legitimacy in Indian political attitudes from survey results reported in Chapter 3.
- 61 Mitra (1988). Also see Luce (2006) on the BJP and Varma (2004).
- 62 For those who do not see the quest for power as a central fact of Indian life, the unabashed quest for power that underpins classic works of political theory such as the Arthashastra or the Mahabharata might come across as a surprise. Contemporary India may very well be on the way to becoming a global player, an economic giant, and an aspirant for membership of the atomic club, but many in India, and abroad, still expect India to be different!
- 63 Max Weber, one of the leading exponents of this view, held caste as the 'transmission belt' between the speculative ideas of the intellectual elite, and the mundane orientation of religious observance among the people at large. By its traditionalism, the caste system retards economic development, and conversely, inter-caste barriers become attenuated wherever

- economic activities attain an increased momentum. Thus, ‘the spirit of the caste system militated against an indigenous development of capitalism’ (Bendix 1960, emphasis added).
- 64 Bailey (1970), Varma (2004) and Krishna (2002).
- 65 See the ‘Breast cloth controversy’ in Hardgrave (1979: 153).
- 66 The Cunning of Reason consists in the ‘hidden dynamic or dialectic which sums the consequences of actions in ways unforeseen by the actors’ (Hollis 1987: 5). India’s complex system of ‘reservation’, institutes a complex quota system intended to benefit Dalits (former untouchables), Scheduled Tribes (tribals) and Backward Classes that have been systematically discriminated against for centuries. These are examples of pro-democratic forces arising from policies adopted by India’s colonial rulers, which gradually took an institutional form.
- 67 By rational choice I understand goal oriented, strategic behaviour which I attribute to India’s voters, political actors, leaders of political parties and movements, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs in all areas of life. This analytical approach, I argue, can enrich our knowledge of Indian politics, and supplement it with historical evolution, rather than going by cultural determinism or mere contingency.
- 68 Beyond the limited remit of this introductory text on India, the use of rational choice as an analytical device can be taken much further. The Indian story needs to be integrated more fully into the best of recent social science research on nation-building and institutional development... [drawing on] Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), North et al. (2009), Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2004) in developing theories of development, growth, democracy-promotion (or the stifling of democracy) and foreign policy that have pushed our knowledge ahead of the insights of Barrington Moore or Samuel Huntington.” Personal communication, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 11.11.2016.
- 69 There is a new genre of “movements” that have an economic content, but are multidimensional and cover a large terrain in practice. This new genre includes high-profile environmental movements, women’s movements, civil-liberties movement, movements for regional self-determination and autonomy, and peasant movement. Other groups focus on peace, disarmament, and denuclearization. In India, civil society activism comprised of conventional and unconventional political actions has captured the wider spectrum of social movements. This development of civil society activism has strengthened the process of democratic consolidation in India. The recent Jan Lokpal Bill Movement under the general leadership of Anna Hazare, building on the legacy of a similar broad based popular movement against the authoritarian rule of Indira Gandhi, under the leadership of Jai Prakash Narayan in 1975, shows the power of India’s civil society as a foundation stone of this post-colonial democracy. These political movements—a generic form of collective political action—both challenge and complement the democratic political process.
- 70 Some of these issues are taken up in Subrata Mitra and Michael Liebig, *Kautilya’s Arthashastra—An Intellectual Biography—the Classical Roots of Modern Politics in India* (Baden Baden: Nomos; 2016).

2 Pre-modern pasts of modern politics

The legacies of British colonial rule

... in a sense it was by doing things properly—more often at least than most Indians—that the British had established themselves in India and that so few ruled so many with so slight a use of overt force. There was a subconscious awareness of this that involved us in a continual effort and expressed itself in all kinds of ways—from insisting on absolute precision in military drill to the punctilious observance of outdated etiquette, or a meticulous insistence on a knife-edge crease to khaki shorts.

Allen (1976), p. 18

‘Gandhi’s commitment to non-violence and truth (*satyagraha*, or ‘truth force’) suggests how traditional ideas can be transformed for modern purposes. He self-consciously rejected the fatalistic, otherworldly, and ritualistic orientation that some Jain and Hindu practitioners had lent them. His private struggle for competence and potency taught him to evoke their humanistic, evangelical, and world-mastering implications. If his commitments to non-violence and *satyagraha* had instrumental dimensions, fitting the requirements of an unarmed nation confronting an imperial conscience capable of responding to moral appeals, he infused their practice with meaning that transcend utility and national boundaries.’

Rudolph and Rudolph (1967), p. 158

Introduction

The roots of politics in contemporary India go back to classical sources such as Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*.¹ India’s political culture—accountability of ruler to the ruled, the separation of spiritual and temporal power, and respect for regional and local autonomy to name only a few—is the product of a long evolution. These norms and traditions have been replenished by successive generations of rulers of India and invaders who in turn have been influenced by India. Compared to the periods of foreign domination, it is the British colonial rule that has undoubtedly made the most visible impact on India’s modern institutions. The origin and evolution of British colonial rule and its long-term impact on modern politics in India are the focus of this chapter.

Starting with a few trading posts located in some port cities, the British built the huge British Indian Empire (see Map 2.1). For the first time in recorded history, the British colonial empire brought practically the whole of the Indian sub-continent under a single rule. The first epigraph to this chapter suggest some of the factors that made this possible. The narrative sheds light on the singularity of the Indian context and the nature of British-Indian encounters at the height of colonial rule. These explain why democracy and governance have had different careers in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh—all of them post-colonial states which emerged out of the British Empire.

As traders and invaders, the British were not exceptional. Over the centuries, India has been no stranger to foreign visitors. A steady stream of traders, travellers, mendicants, pilgrims, scholars, fortune-hunters, adventurers and invaders has travelled to India from lands far and wide. They have come in search of knowledge, enlightenment, adventure, loot, trade or territory. Some have gone back to their points of origin; some have moved on to greener pastures, and a few have stayed back, found a home within the sprawling sub-continent and a niche within Indian society. They have enriched Indian society by adding to it their culture, cuisine and rituals, just as their sacred figures have become part of India's religious Pantheon. But India's encounter with Britain has had a distinct quality of its own. It started in 1600 A.D. with the grant of Charter to the British East India Company by Queen Elizabeth I (Box 2.1) and ended, formally in 1947, after a colonial rule of a century and a half.

As traders turned into invaders and adventurers turned into colonial rulers, the British masters refined the fine art of governing by stealth, economising the use of force through indirect rule. In turn, the Indian population, restive under foreign occupation, learnt to engage the British through non-violent protest. Out of this dialectic between colonial rule and Indian resistance to it, there emerged a tradition of collaboration and conflict, and the Indian National Congress (INC). It was a political party keen on intermediation and modern political institutions, which eventually paved the way towards a peaceful Transfer of Power in 1947. This marked the end of Empire and the beginning of a new chapter in the political history of India. British rule left India poor in wealth but rich in democratic potential. The continuous interaction of British raj and Indian resistance to it, lasting over several decades generated a new form of national identity and political community. It also generated new forms of repression and accommodation, new political groupings, new norms of rule and institutions to facilitate a limited participation of the subject population in the process of governance.²

Why British rule, more than any other phase of India's pre-Independence history, should be singled out for special attention in a book primarily on modern India, calls for a brief explanation. The British were not the only external invaders to have colonised India. But the impact of British colonization was vastly different from all other rulers of external provenance. There are two crucial reasons for this. First, even though the British rulers did not think of the colonial rule as a permanent condition, they still regarded their contribution to Indian civilization as permanent.³ The British rulers of India developed their unique method of governance through a combination of colonial exploitation, strategic accommodation and relentless repression of threats to imperial order. The investments of time, effort and talent in designing institutions to ensure orderly rule were enormous. Their efforts at introducing modern institutions into a traditional society have survived the formal end of colonial rule. One needs only to look below the surface of most modern institutions in India to discover the British imprint.

Modern institutions of India, nationalist sentiments notwithstanding, are thus a true British legacy. A critical analysis of British rule and Indian resistance to it helps explain why democratic institutions have worked more effectively in India as compared to her neighbours. The synthesis of British constitutional norms and political forms with India's indigenous political tradition led to a different outcome from the path that other successor states took. This ensues from the phenomenon of 're-use'—a quintessential Indian method of adaption and innovation—where past institutions and practices often continue within the present institutional arrangement by deliberate design. In the hands of British architects and designers of political institutions, British rules strategically conflated alien norms and designs with indigenous practices, leading to the creation of new

capital cities, infrastructure and an array of innovative legislation. Avid re-users,⁴ India's leaders have appropriated many of the symbols and institutions of their predecessors and cloaked them in Indian garb. This blending of indigenous tradition and imported institutions explains both the ability of the British to rule for so long with little recourse to overt force and the smooth transition from colonial rule to the multi-party democracy that has become the hallmark of the Indian state.

India's living pasts

That the past influences the present is commonplace. Even revolutionaries, for whom wiping out the vestiges of the *ancient regime* is part of their legitimating myth, end up by re-admitting elements of the past into the present.⁵ The Constitution of contemporary India admits the pre-modern origins of the modern Republic squarely by stating in the first article, 'India, that is Bharat'⁶—the reference is to the country of a mythical King whose empire corresponds to undivided India, 'shall be a Union of States'. Choices made in the past influence the political framework of the present. Every generation of leaders chooses alternatives strategically from among alternatives available at a given time. Once made, the selected option affects future developments. Thus, choices made at every nodal point of history are path dependent on previous choices. That said, path dependence is of course not the same as path slavery. Rejecting the past lock stock and barrel is the stuff of revolutionary rhetoric of all ideological hues. The distinctive feature of India in this context is the predominance of continuity and incremental evolution rather than quantum leaps into the unknown, where a revolutionary generation claims to mark the start of a new epoch.

In India, as we shall see in this chapter, there have been no great political ruptures in the past comparable to the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia or the peasant revolution that led to the setting up of the People's Democratic Republic of China in 1949. Nor has any historical phenomenon, equivalent to the European Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment or the Inquisition, drawn a sharp line between the natural and the supernatural.⁷ In India, in contrast to China, Pakistan or European liberal democratic states, continuity with the distant past rather than rupture is the rule.

Thus, 'reading history backwards', one can see how closely India's pasts have influenced the evolving present. The salient events that connect Indian antiquity with the post-Independence republic help understand the tortuous path that the evolution of the contemporary state has taken (Box 2.1). The declaration of India's Independence by the British Parliament in 1947 had been facilitated by the fact that there was a government-in-waiting, led by Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues from the INC, some with considerable administrative experience, to whom power could be transferred. The successors to the British, both in India and in Pakistan, were parties that emerged victorious out of elections held in 1945–46. However, quite fortuitously for India, the Congress party was much better placed to act as the vehicle for the 'Transfer of Power' from colonial rule to multi-party democracy. After Partition, it stayed put on its own political soil, with its links to its constituents intact. The leaders of the Muslim League, on the other hand, left India for West and East Pakistan, where they were soon embroiled in a power conflict with the local leaders, and eventually, the army. Despite great efforts to keep British India intact as one independent country, the project had foundered on the issue of the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims, as demanded by the Lahore Resolution of the League in 1940. The Pakistan Resolution of 1940 was itself the outcome of elite competition for the spoils of office. The distrust between the two main

protagonists—the Congress Party and the Muslim League—resulted from the refusal of the former to share power on an equitable basis after the elections of 1937. This critical election was held under the Government of India Act, 1935, passed by the British Parliament which introduced a measure of self-government in India. One can keep tracing the political transition backwards until recorded history shades off into the mythical past.⁸

The process of devolution of power by the British that started with the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, leading up to the 1935 Government of India Act, will be discussed below as part of the analysis of the institutional arrangement of colonial rule. These reforms, in turn, were possible because of the strategic ‘re-use’ of pre-British institutions and practices, both of India’s Muslim rulers and their Hindu predecessors, by the victorious colonial power. The process of institutional evolution accounts for the continuities of Indian politics. As part of the same process, the memory of past conflicts and collaboration has continued in the form of the rituals, customs and traditions which are an integral part of the present institutional structure and political process.⁹ Reading history backwards, as one can see in Box 2.1, has an important advantage for comparative political analysis. It helps appreciate the *political* basis of many phenomena that come across as essentially cultural.¹⁰ The section that follows will draw on India’s past to illuminate the present.

BOX 2.1 READING HISTORY BACKWARDS: PATH DEPENDENCY AND, RE-USE OF THE PAST IN THE MAKING OF THE PRESENT

1947	Independence of India Act passed by the British Parliament, Partition of British India into India and Pakistan, and the Transfer of Power to both Dominions.
1945–46	Elections held to name members to the central and provincial legislatures of British India.
1940	The Muslim League passed the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore.
1935	The Government of India Act established a federal government; turned over provincial governments completely to Indian ministers, with Governors retaining emergency powers.
1919	Montagu-Chelmsford Act introduced the constitutional principle of diarchy, which separated ‘reserved’ subjects controlled by British officials from ‘transferred’ subjects to be controlled by non-officials.
1909	Morley-Minto Reforms, undertaken by the colonial government, expanded central and provincial legislatures, made non-official majorities in provincial legislatures possible, and provided for separate electorates to give minority communities additional weight.
1906	Founding of the Muslim League.
1885	Founding of the INC.
1861	Indian Councils Act created the office of the Secretary of State for India and made the Governor General of India the Viceroy—representative of the Crown in India.

1858	The British Crown abolished the East India Company and assumed direct control of India.
1857	Indian Mutiny—also known as the ‘First War of Independence’.
1837	Macaulay drafts the Indian Penal Code.
1833	The Charter Renewal Act explicitly recognized the East India Company as the Government of India and gave it the power to issue acts.
1793	Lord Cornwallis establishes the <i>zamindari system</i> through the Permanent Settlement of Bengal.
1784	The British Parliament passed the India Act which sets up the Board of Control to supervise the Company’s affairs in India.
1773	The British Parliament passed the Regulating Act to define the commercial and political functions of the East India Company.
1757	Battle of Plassey. Clive defeated Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah.
1600	The grant of Charter to the British East India Company by Queen Elizabeth I.
1556–1605	Reign of Akbar, the Great Mughal Emperor.
1398	Tamerlane wins the battle of Panipat and reduces Delhi to ‘bubble’.
998	First raid by Mahmud of Ghazni, followed by sixteen further raids.
711	Landing of Mohammed-bin-Kasim in Sind, the first Muslim invasion of India.
4th century	Rule of the Gupta Empire. ¹
321 BCE	Formation of the Maurya Empire by Chandragupta Maurya and composition of the Arthashastra—the great treatise on the science of government.
326 BCE	The invasion of northern India by Alexander the Great.
Before 500 BCE	Writing of the <i>Ramayana</i> and <i>Mahabharata</i> , India’s two greatest epics.

The exact constellation of forces that led to state formation in India is a subject of wide debate.¹¹ The British colonial rule was the most recent of foreign incursions on the Indian land mass, but it was not the only enduring legacy of exogenous provenance. While the legacy of British colonial rule and Indian resistance to it is easy to detect, one can see the survival of pre-British India just under the surface. The Greek invasion of India¹² was followed by the Mongols, Mughals, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French. Each invasion left behind a residue that in the course of time became a part of the antecedent culture and state tradition of India (Box 2.1).

‘Arrested decay’: colonial representations of the Indian past

At the first glance, one notices few vestiges of British colonial rule that are still recognizably British in Indian politics. A period of seventy years of vigorous party competition has whittled down institutions and practices of foreign provenance and recast them to fit local moulds and local political environments. India’s traditional institutions have

generated the requisite space to accommodate foreign bodies in their midst. The memory of colonial rule has gradually faded and re-emerged in a new form. Examples of such re-use of colonial institutions in post-Independence politics are plentiful. Though not always so clearly visible to those who are unfamiliar with India's colonial interlude, specialists recognize British derivation of the rules, procedures and rituals of the Indian Parliament.¹³ For example, *Devaswam Boards* in South India oversee the administration of old temples as of the new. Government ministers of democratic India, much like their colonial and pre-colonial predecessors, hold *durbar*, and transact state business with a motley crowd of visitors, with the same display of power, privilege and pomp as their colonial predecessors. Thanks to re-use and its legitimacy within Indian context and culture, Independent India has shown, once again, the country's capacity to achieve incremental change without revolution.

The British strategy of domination considered the gain in legitimacy through the re-use of the institutions and sacred symbols of those defeated by it. It consisted of selected incorporation of some elements of the Indian past and conspicuous rejection of the rest. Imperial design and utilitarian ideology converged in the 'Anglo-Indian' style in architectural—as much as institutional—design. The sole opportunity for colonized Indians to advance, as they saw it, consisted in the acceptance of modern (European) science, technology and values. The coming of Gandhi, and subsequently India's Independence challenged it, in the process opening the flood-gates into India's pre-modern past for those fighting for freedom from colonial rule.

British rule, unlike other invaders of India, was special in the manner of its appropriation of the past. Up to the arrival of the British, the past and the present had lived in a complex and dynamic symbiosis in India. But, under the British, the past was reduced to the 'past' but was used to enhance the legitimacy of an alien ruler.¹⁴ The point is made by Metcalf (1998) in a seminal article on aesthetics and power under colonial rule. While the British continued the tradition of 'appropriating the politically charged forms of their predecessors as a way of legitimizing their own regime' (*ibid.*: 14), their method of depicting the past differed radically from that of their predecessors. Previous rulers of India had added their visions and symbols to existing designs so that the past and the present could appear as part of a continuous flow. However, in British public buildings and political institutions, the past was depicted as the 'past' whose only function was to serve as a foil, on which the British present could shine brighter while staying aloof and distant. In a memorable passage, Metcalf recounts how the British *durbar* was traditional in form but thoroughly modern in content.

In his 1903 *durbar* ... Curzon sought to utilize the 'familiar' and even sacred form of 'the East'. As he proudly proclaimed, the entire arena was 'built and decorated exclusively in the Mogul, or Indo-Saracenic style'. Yet Curzon refused to sanction an exchange of presents, or *nazrs* which had formed the central binding element of pre-colonial durbars. Instead, he had each prince in their turn mount the dais and offer a message of congratulation to the King-Emperor. Curzon then simply shook hands with the chief as he passed by. Incorporation and inclusion, so powerfully symbolized by *khillat* and *nazr*, had given way, despite the Mughal scenery and pretence, to a wholly colonial ritual.¹⁵

In aesthetics, as in politics, the colonial strategy consisted of the incorporation of the past—Indian tradition in this case—within the framework of colonial institutions in a subsidiary capacity. The past, as Metcalf points out, could be a figment of colonial

imagination and incorporation. Nandy adds in the same vein, ‘Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through its military and technological prowess as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order.’¹⁶

Colonial aesthetic and colonial politics were of one piece. The architecture of colonial rule worked to one common purpose of selective incorporation, de-linking traditional elites from their ancestral moorings, and justifying their power in terms of the Idea of Progress, of which colonial rule was but an instrument.¹⁷ The Archaeological Survey of India preserved India’s monuments—both sacred and administrative—in a state of ‘arrested decay’,¹⁸ isolated and distanced from the community of which they used to be an integral part. So, did the new British-established political and administrative institutions, which presented the Indian past as inferior to the British present, and by the same analogy, the modernity symbolized by colonial rule as the superior future.

Colonial rule thus affected Indian society much more widely and radically than any previous invasion of India. The combination of Utilitarian philosophy—of using the power of science, technology and politics for ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’—and the British solicitude to build alliances based on short-term interests, a policy that eventually came to be known as ‘divide and rule’, generated enthusiastic support for British rule from some corners of Indian society. There were winners, and new stakeholders, on the Indian side too. Nandy comments, ‘These hierarchies [modern as opposed to traditional] opened up new vistas for many, particularly for those exploited or cornered within the traditional order’.¹⁹

The result of these architectural and political innovations was the most profound social change that India had experienced until then. It was a process that transformed British subjects of 1858 into a politically charged body, ready to wrest power from alien hands and exercise it democratically by 1947. Particularly during the later years of colonial rule, complex political negotiations and transactions rather than the classic movers of European social transformation such as the Industrial Revolution, religious conflict or war became the prime mover of social change. The state and its bureaucracy, rather than captains of industry, generals or the church, were the main agents of change in Indian society. That became the basis of the centrality of the state and bureaucratic politics in the political landscape of British India under colonial rule and subsequently in the post-colonial state.

Never in history had so few decided the fate of so many in such important ways as the British conquerors of India.²⁰ At the height of their power, the British thought of themselves as charged with the responsibility of recasting Indian tradition in the design of modernity, much like the Utilitarian plans for the spread of enlightenment. In this mission, the British government and the technicians of the Empire made progress on their common cause. Subsequently, the post-colonial government under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian planners continued this legacy in their Five Year Plans. This has been evocatively described by the metaphor of the Indian state as ‘avatars of Vishnu’ (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987; refer to epigraph at the beginning of this chapter), indicating thereby the capacity of the state to play a central, critical and formative role in social change.

Institutional innovation under colonial rule

By 15 August 1947, with the famous ‘Freedom at Midnight’ speech behind him (Box 2.2), Jawaharlal Nehru was firmly ensconced in office as the first Prime Minister of Independent India. The administrative and political challenges that the new government

BOX 2.2 TRYST WITH DESTINY

Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment, we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

At the dawn of history, India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike, she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of ill fortune, and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Source: Jawaharlal Nehru, *Tryst with Destiny*, in Rushdie and West 1997: 1–2.

faced were enormous. Independence entailed both the departure of substantial numbers of British civil servants and the division of assets, establishments and personnel of all wings of the government and, crucially, the armed forces and foreign services between India and Pakistan. Added to these disruptions of everyday administration, there was a war in Kashmir against Pakistan, the closing of the Indian mission in Lhasa in Tibet, and the responsibility of caring for millions of refugees pouring into India from West and East Pakistan, crowding every available corner in Delhi and Calcutta. The fact that the new government could cope with the stress successfully and still hold the first General Election to the Indian Parliament and provincial assemblies is to be attributed to the fortuitous presence of a talented team of Indian leaders and administrators (discussed later in this chapter) and to the special circumstances under which the Transfer of Power to Indian hands took place.

Going by the discourse of the British Parliament, India's Independence was a story foretold. Already, as far back as 1833 (Box 2.1), the Charter Renewal Act had put on record a commitment in favour of 'greater measure of Indian participation in the governing of the country'.²¹ The terms under which the British Parliament recognized the East India Company (set up in 1600 under a licence from the British Crown to trade with India as the lawful government of India under the authority of the British Crown), stated explicitly that '... no native of India, nor any natural born subject of His Majesty, should be disabled from holding any place, office or employment by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour'.²² Nor did the British express any explicit intention to stay in India in perpetuity. Unlike Australia, Canada or Rhodesia, India was never 'home' for the British. It was a colony, a market, a career opportunity, the Jewel in the Crown, but distant and, in the last analysis, dispensable. When the time was ripe, the reins to India's governance were to be bequeathed to Indians.

During the eventful century that connected the Charter Renewal Act (1833) and the Government of India Act (1935), British dominance of India reached its zenith. A series of Governors-General, each committed to reform and the maintenance of colonial hegemony, though in different measures, stood by the ultimate goals of sustaining orderly rule, and profitability of the colony to the British Treasury. Both objectives required the recruitment of vast numbers of Indians to the lower ranks in the revenue administration, police and army, judiciary, health and other colonial services and in the burgeoning Indian schools and universities. The number of educated Indians who poured out of the new universities but could not get gainful employment grew. In the absence of industrial growth, the stagnant economy (Table 2.1) could not absorb this growing army of job seekers. This contributed to the pressure on the colonial government for more jobs in Indian hands, and seats in the legislatures to be allocated to Indian leaders.

After Macaulay's Minutes of 1835, which stated the case firmly for introducing modern English education in India, there was no turning back on the British project of India's modernisation. The growing Indian middle class—whom the new educational system and media could wean away from the traditional, vernacular set-up—became a bastion of the Indian 'renaissance', civic and political activity and, under the leadership of Raja Rammohan Roy, support for social and political reform. But reaction and retribution were to come swiftly. Colonial support for the social agenda got a rude setback in the 1857 Mutiny against British rule, led by an assortment of Muslim and Hindu notables made destitute by British rule.

Despite its early successes, the rebellion was ruthlessly put down by the British who controlled intelligence, transport and the techniques of modern warfare. The British Crown assumed direct control of India in 1858 once the mutineers were decisively defeated, and a comprehensive legal structure called the Indian Councils Act was drawn up in 1861. It provided for a Secretary of State for India with cabinet rank, with sole responsibility for India. The Governor General and, subsequently, the Viceroy²³ were to represent the Crown in India. The founding of the INC in 1885 gave an institutional focus to the articulation of Indian demands. Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the full spectrum of forces was in place. The INC as the representative of the colonial subjects was to press for reform, while the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India were charged with a double role. They were to defend imperial interests while simultaneously trying to process Indian demands for the consideration of the British Parliament. These pulls and counter-pulls led to the incremental devolution of power to Indian hands through the reform acts of 1909, 1919 and finally the Government of India Act of 1935.

Table 2.1 India's GDP as a share of the world economy: 1–2001 AD (in percent)

	1	1000	1500	1600	1700	1820	1870	1913	1950	1973	2001
Western Europe	10.8	8.7	17.8	19.8	21.9	23.0	33.0	33.0	26.2	25.6	20.3
Former USSR	1.5	2.4	3.4	3.5	4.4	5.4	7.5	8.5	9.6	9.4	3.6
United States	—	—	0.3	0.2	0.1	1.8	8.8	18.9	27.3	22.1	21.4
Japan	1.2	2.7	3.1	2.9	4.1	3.0	2.3	2.6	3.0	7.8	7.1
China	26.1	22.7	24.9	29.0	22.3	32.9	17.1	8.8	4.5	4.6	12.3
India	32.9	28.9	24.4	22.4	24.4	16.0	12.1	7.5	4.2	3.1	5.4

Source: Maddison 2003: 261 (Table 8b).

The expansion of the British Empire

The expansion of British rule in India has many explanations, of which the most popular attributes it to the European rivalry for overseas markets in the seventeenth century. The key events in Box 2.1 identify the turning points in the expansion of British influence and, subsequently, imperial domination of India. The exact reasons for the apparent ease with which it spread (Box 2.3) are subject to controversy.²⁴ How did the East India Company come to dominate India's political economy? Was this a function of inherent racial or social superiority, or a more complex causation, linked to the international political economy of the time, and the nature of state formation in India? On balance, internal wars and British conquest of Indian territories appear to have played a crucial role here. Pitched against the institutional and military strength of the modern state, India—a *segmentary state*²⁵—was not able to offer collective resistance. This is the common narrative thread that connects the defeat of Siraj-ud-Daulah in the Battle of Plassey (1775) with the heroic and futile battles of the Hindu and Muslim leaders of the Sepoy Mutiny (1857), which England won because of her superior sense of organization. Ultimately, it is not so much the Enfield gun as modern book-keeping and the telegraph that won the empire for the British.

Once the British established their rule, they succeeded in bringing the various local and regional units under a central government. This supreme colonial body nevertheless drew heavily on indirect rule through quasi-autonomous intermediaries such as native princes, landholders and *zamindars*. Taken as a whole, these three functions—wars of conquest, alliances and plunder—describe the dynamic behind the expansion of colonial rule in India. Rothermund explains this remarkable phenomenon in terms of ‘parasitism and paralysis’.²⁶ Further support for this explanation with regard to the interlocking of the economy and politics, and the superior-subordinate development of England and India comes from Eric Stokes.²⁷ Several shades of belief in racial supremacy ultimately came to characterize the nature of the colonial mission.²⁸ Chris Bayly explains the momentum behind the British expansion in terms of ‘tax-farming, extraction of surplus’, and ultimately, the incentive to acquire the wealth of India by Company servants through private trade. Indian attempts at setting themselves up in trade or industry as rivals of the British were often discouraged by the colonial authorities. *Zamindari* and the system of indirect rule²⁹ accompanied by the annexation of native princely states marked the steady expansion of British rule. Map 2.1 shows all these factors at work.

As conquerors of India, the British were not any more benign than their Muslim predecessors, but the vast changes in technology and the international political economy had transformed the nature of political domination. Plunder of precious metal and stones

BOX 2.3 PHASES OF BRITISH COLONIAL RULE IN INDIA

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1600–1757 | Competing European powers as a mercantile presence in India. |
| 1757–1856 | Expansion of the British Empire. |
| 1857 | Sepoy Mutiny; British victory leads to the ‘High Noon’ of the Empire. |
| 1858–1947 | Consolidation of British rule, and the Transfer of Power, leading to Independence |



Map 2.1 Political map of British India.

Source: South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg 2010.

was replaced by the mode of colonial exploitation.³⁰ The consequences are best seen in terms of the decline of India's share of world GDP from 24.4 percent at the start of colonial rule (c. 1700) to 4.2 percent in 1950 when it formally came to an end (Table 2.1).

The British Raj and Indian resistance

The INC was the main political party in the Constituent Assembly, which drafted the Indian Constitution, and subsequently formed the government, having won the first General Election. Its origin and development are yet more evidence of India's useful pasts regarding the structure and content of its modern politics.

For over half a century, between its formation in 1885 and the final coming of Independence in 1947, the Congress remained the focus of the national struggle to free India from British rule. It followed a strategy that combined political objectives with those of social reform and national administration. This complex repertoire of competition and collaboration with the foreign rulers became the hallmark of Congress politics. It steadily expanded the political agenda to include virtually all aspects of national life, exerting pressure on the British to concede more power to Indian hands. It used the

power and resources thus gained to strengthen the organizational and political network. When the British thought that they had conceded enough and the negotiations came to a standstill, the Congress took to direct action and mass struggle, exerting pressure until the British returned to the negotiations. This legacy of direct action, mass movement and transactional politics based on patronage became an important ingredient of the political culture that sustained democratic rule in India after Independence. The Gandhian blend of British parliamentary methods and indigenous techniques made a direct political action such as *satyagraha* an integral part of political culture and tradition in post-Independence India.³¹

The Gandhian synthesis of modernity and tradition

The Congress party became the vehicle of the synthesis of the two main strands of Indian nationalism—the liberal constitutionalists like the ‘moderate’ Gopal Krishna Gokhale and the radical ‘extremists’ led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Following its foundation in 1885 by a retired British civil servant—Sir Alan Octavian Hume—the INC gradually acquired a complex character of collaborator and competitor with colonial rule, combining participation and protest action as a two-track strategy of power³² (Box 2.4). Broadly speaking, with the exception the Muslim League and its trenchant demand for the creation of Pakistan, despite their different approaches to engagement with colonial rule, there was plenty of interaction among the leaders of India’s freedom movement. The close interaction of bulk of the leadership was strong enough for plurality, accommodation and rule by consensus to emerge as salient norms of the India’s post-Independence state. After Independence, when its rival Muslim League left India for Pakistan, the Congress—complete with its party organization, Nehru as Prime Minister-in-waiting, its core ideas about planning, foreign policy and nation-building already shaped—was more than ready for to the Transfer of Power to its capable and willing hands.

BOX 2.4 PHASES OF INDIA’S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

- ‘Moderate’—Gokhale, G.K. (1866–1915)
- ‘Extremist’—Tilak, B.G. (1864–1920)
- The movement for Pakistan—Jinnah, M. K. (1876–1949)
- The Gandhian synthesis—Gandhi, M. K. ‘Mahatma’ (1869–1948)

Mahatma Gandhi, the most outstanding leader of India’s struggle for independence and a continuing source of moral inspiration, was trained as a Barrister-at-Law in England. He developed *satyagraha*—non-violent resistance—while he was in South Africa working for an Indian law firm. The South African experience also taught Gandhi the importance of cross-community coalitions, a theme that he subsequently transformed into ‘Hindu–Muslim unity’. This became a salient feature of Gandhi’s politics upon his return to India in 1915, and a hallmark of the politics of the Congress Party which found it useful as a political instrument to fend off its challengers—the Hindu Right, the Muslim League and their British patrons. Under his leadership, the INC

became increasingly sensitive to the gap between the predominantly urban middle-class Congress party and the Indian masses, and shifted its attention to the Indian peasantry.

Inspired by Gandhi, the INC steadily broadened its reach in terms of both social class and geography. In 1918, while introducing *satyagraha* as a method of peaceful political protest in India, Gandhi courted arrest in support of the indigo plantation workers of Bihar. There were similar movements in Punjab, Gujarat and other parts of India. To mobilize mass support, Gandhi also introduced several indigenous political practices like fasting and general strikes or *hartal* (a form of boycott accompanied by the stoppage of work). In choosing civil disobedience to resist the Salt Tax imposed by the British, Gandhi showed his brilliance as a strategist. When the British rulers responded with repressive measures, their efforts to contain the unrest only contributed to the intensification of the struggle. This became a model for subsequent civil disobedience movements through which Gandhi mobilized peasantry and workers as well as the urban middle classes. He combined the techniques of political negotiation with more coercive direct action (such as *hartal*, *satyagraha* and the like) and derived both the political resources and the methods from within Indian culture, religion and history and blended them with ideas of passive resistance.³³

The British responded to increasingly vocal demands for political participation with the Government of India Act of 1935 and its predecessors—the Montagu-Chelmsford Act of 1919 and the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 (Box 2.1). These became the legal basis of India's constitutional development and, subsequently, an important blueprint for the constitution of Independent India. The voting franchise continued to carry a property qualification, but the electorate was nevertheless expanded from 6 million to 30 million. Provincial elections held under restricted franchise gave the Congress Party valuable experience in electoral campaigns and governance. Both became crucial assets for the establishment of an orderly political process after Independence.

While the political and constitutional developments that took place under British rule are important legacies on their own, the effect of British rule itself on Indian society was also very important in terms of the psychological impact on Indian identity and selfhood.³⁴ The first social reformers, whose agenda included some of the programmes advocated by the British Utilitarian movement, looked up to the British colonial government as allies in a joint struggle. The Congress, which brought the reformist and radical strands of Indian nationalism together, acquired a new social base as the movement, under Gandhi's leadership, mobilized the peasantry, labour and other occupational groups in rural and urban areas. The Congress as an office-seeking and anti-colonial movement became the instigator and beneficiary of reform. The constitutional reforms of 1909 had conceded limited Indian representation. But the extent of the franchise and the power and functions of elected members were severely circumscribed.

The reforms of 1919 provided for a relatively large measure of responsibility at the local and provincial levels in areas such as education, health and public works that were not 'reserved' or deemed crucial for colonial control. The Congress took advantage of these reforms to participate in the local and municipal elections, which greatly enhanced the strength and vigour of the democratic government after Independence. By making common cause with middle-class aspirations, it earned the trust and loyalty of the middle class while challenging the authority and legitimacy of British rule. These same social groups were among its more important social bases of support. In addition, the Congress developed the ability for the aggregation of interests, a talent for sustained and coordinated political action, and the skills of administration through vigorous

participation in elections, particularly in those to the provincial legislature under the Government of India Act of 1935. The leaders of the Congress party also gained what few anti-colonial movements had, namely a taste of genuine political competition, political training in the art of administration and the experience of patronage as a tool of political transactions, support and loyalty. These would become valuable tools of Congress raj in the years after Independence.

'Divide and quit': independence and the bitter aftermath of partition

The approach of the Second World War saw India's politics evolve around two intersecting dimensions. On the one hand, there was an anti-imperial dimension which aligned the INC, the Muslim League and other groups against the British colonial government. On the other hand, the demand for Pakistan—a territorial state that could act as a homeland for the Muslims of South Asia—was increasingly voiced by the League. It saw itself as the champion of Muslim demands, which led to a different alignment of forces, with the Congress party opposed to the demand for Partition,³⁵ and the British government and some sections of India's non-Congress opinion either supportive of it or equivocal towards it.

In the event, following the Lahore Resolution of 1940 in which the League categorically asked for Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of South Asia, the polarization of opinion between it and the Congress on the issue of Partition was complete. The Congress party rejected the British demand for cooperation with the war effort in its Quit India Resolution of 1942, and chose, instead, to court mass arrest as a protest against British rule. This accelerated the Congress-League divide on the one hand and British sympathy towards the League on the other. The large-scale arrest of Congress leaders in 1942 temporarily removed the Congress party from the arena as an active player, enabling the Muslim League and the Communist Party of India to increase their strength. Jinnah's call for Pakistan gave the Muslim League a political slogan of great mass appeal among the Muslims of India. In 1944, Chakravarti Rajgopalachari—a Congress leader from South India—voiced his support for the partition of the sub-continent on religious lines as a better alternative to violence and bloodshed. His proposal was vehemently opposed by the Congress leadership, which led to his withdrawal from the leadership of the party. But British government opinion was steadily moving in the direction of Partition. In 1945, the Labour Party won the election in England and expressed its keen desire to end colonial rule in India. In 1945–46, elections were held in India to appoint members of the central and provincial legislatures. In these elections, the Congress and the Muslim League emerged as winners—the former winning almost all the Hindu-dominated constituencies and the latter doing likewise in Muslim-dominated constituencies. Clearly, the League could demonstrate its strong presence in all the Muslim-dominated parts of the country except the North-West Frontier Province.

The British Prime Minister Clement Attlee sent the Cabinet Mission in 1946 which proposed a 'federal union' for India which would have dominion status and be fully free to secede from the British Empire. A Constituent Assembly was to be elected by the provincial legislative assemblies, and a constitution was to be formed, with limited functions held by the Union (foreign affairs, defence and communications) and with the residual powers to be held by the provinces. The interim government was to carry on until the constitution was devised; provinces with a Muslim majority could meet to

consider forming an intermediary government between the Union and the provinces to safeguard the interests of Muslims.

Although there was some opposition to the terms of the Cabinet Mission plan, it became increasingly clear that the idea had the implicit support of most of the political forces active in India at that time. Elections were held for the Constituent Assembly in July 1946. The Congress won 205 seats and the Muslim League won 73. The Constituent Assembly held its first meeting on 9 December 1946, but Muslim League members did not participate then, or at any subsequent point. Ultimately, the Viceroy invited the Congress Party under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru to constitute the government which took the oath of office on 6 August 1946. Seats were reserved for the Muslim League which took them up in October 1946, but the chasm between the two parties had by then become almost unbridgeable. Finally, following the great Calcutta killings of 1946, triggered by Jinnah's call for 'direct action' to secure Pakistan, the Congress agreed to the Partition. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 passed by the British Parliament included the terms of the Transfer of Power. The long battle for supremacy finally won; Jinnah became the Governor General of Pakistan. The INC, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, retained Lord Mountbatten as the head of state of India, with the formal title of Governor General of the independent Dominion of India (1947–48).

After nearly two centuries of British colonial rule, often referred to as the British Raj, India became independent on 15 August 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, a leading figure in the anti-colonial campaign and a proponent of non-alignment for India, soon became one of the leaders of the newly emerging 'Third World'. Unlike the post-revolutionary elite of China and the USSR, Nehru and his associates were a national leadership constituted through a process of consensus building, of inclusion rather than elimination of challengers, and accommodation of a broad political spectrum. The character of the new political system was shaped by the legacies of Indian history and social diversity, but most of all by the nature of the local and regional resistance to colonial rule. The middle class, which included many of these leaders, had an ambiguous relationship with the British presence in India. Some of this class fought for the Raj and some against it, but the class became a political link between British rule and Indian society. This served a critical function in the evolution of an authentic Indian form of politics that drew as much on British institutions as on Indian tradition.

Some legacies of colonial rule

Though India has been subjected to foreign incursion since the beginning of recorded history, the British impact was the most penetrating and remains paramount. During the struggle for Independence, many found it convenient to blame colonial rule for many of India's ills.³⁶ This tendency of blame-shifting appears to have given way to a more sophisticated and nuanced evaluation.³⁷ India's current prowess in IT and outsourcing are attributed to her skilled manpower, well versed in English, an obvious legacy of colonial rule. If India has succeeded in achieving a generally peaceful and orderly transition from colonial rule to Independence, and subsequently to a stable multi-party democracy with slow but steady economic growth, as some argue,³⁸ then British colonial rule must bear part of the responsibility both for its main achievements and for its failings.

The distinct character of Indian politics derives in no small measure from the trickling down of the norms of British constitutionalism, and the 'trickling up' of Indian custom.

Both can be seen as consequences of the British colonial strategy to rule with the minimum necessary use of overt force. Honouring local custom, accommodating local rulers and transforming local and regional power into props of imperial rule were all a part of this grand plan. The legacies continue to affect politics in contemporary India.

The most important of the legacies consist of the modern political institutions, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and the process of parties and interest groups as well as the quintessential Indian political strategy that combines institutional participation and political protest (Chapter 6). The main legacy of pre-Independence politics to post-Independence practice is the effort on all sides to bring political competition into the ambit of the rule of law, moderate politics and political institutions. When rules appear too restrictive or not sufficiently legitimate and the game threatens to get out of hand, the state intervenes with its own mixed strategy of suppression and accommodation, in a manner akin to that of its British predecessor. With some exceptions such as the continuing conflict in Kashmir and the North-East, this mixed strategy of combining force with accommodation has worked successfully, adding layers of new elites and political arenas into the political system. The modest origin of decentralization has matured into a full-fledged federal system, comparable to the now defunct Soviet federal system in its institutional complexity but endowed with far more vitality, as one can see from its resilience.

The strength of India's institutional arrangement derives in part from the Indian bureaucracy which is yet another legacy of British rule. The Indian Civil Service (ICS), which was considered the steel frame of the Empire at its peak, was renamed the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) post-Independence. It became the long arm of the post-colonial state and started reaching out to the periphery of society. Thanks to the bold endeavour to extend representation through India's complex quota system, unlike its colonial predecessor, the IAS and other similar services soon began to resemble Indian society in terms of social composition. The Indian police and army, after the traumatic event of the Partition, which saw them split into the security wings of two hostile neighbours, have nevertheless emerged as professional bodies.

The legacy is more mixed in the economic arena. The decline of India's economy, particularly in manufacturing, was a direct consequence of British protectionism. But even more important was the isolation of India from the two-way transfer of knowledge, a process that revolutionized European industry in a matter of a few decades because of the colonial boundaries over international trade.³⁹ A more basic problem for India's economy was the colonial form of trade which transformed India into a net importer of British manufactured goods. True, taking advantage of the disruption of the inter-war years, some industries had grown in areas such as textiles, but even these developed their own pathologies of limited growth, militant trade unionism, and a culture of dependence on the government. These attitudes carried over into the immediate post-war years and produced the same mentality that is simultaneously combative and dependent (Chapter 7). The tradition of planning to meet wartime scarcity also carried over to Independent India and made bureaucratic control a higher priority than productivity. Finally, in agriculture, the residual legacy of the *zamindari* system and its deeply exploitative 'rack-renting' made subsistence farming an enduring phenomenon.⁴⁰ Though the Green Revolution has helped parts of India to move away from this low-risk, low-yield method of cultivation, large parts of the country are still in the grip of this form of cultivation and its consequences in terms of poverty and violent class conflict.

In the social sphere, though the British withdrew from large-scale reform after the Mutiny of 1857, the seeds of reform planted in the period that preceded it took root

and generated a dynamic of their own. The result was the emergence of movements of emancipation on the part of the untouchable castes,⁴¹ the slow politicization of Muslims, leading to Islamic separatism, and the slow but steady emancipation of tribals and untouchables—situated at the lowest levels of Hindu society—and women.

Yet another British legacy that continues to affect Indian politics is the moral attitude to power. Colonial rule generated loyalty as well as resistance, both violent and non-violent. But most of all, Indians could relate to power only as subjects—willing or unwilling—but not as citizens. As such, trust in those organs of the government with which people come into contact on an everyday basis—the police, bureaucrats and politicians—continues to be low, whereas trust in those institutions that had helped subjects stand up to superior power, such as the judiciary, continues to be high. This creates a hiatus between trust in parties and the government, but not in politicians and the police, which makes legitimacy a difficult proposition, and elections very much an opportunity to ‘throw the rascals out’ rather than the meticulous weighing up of the options being offered by the competing parties.⁴²

Finally, the structure and process of India’s political system should be considered the most important of British legacies. As we have already seen in the introductory chapter, this institutional framework offers a method of state–society interaction where the new social elites, themselves the outcome of a process of fair and efficient political recruitment, play a two-track strategy and institute processes of law and order management, strategic social and economic reform and accommodation of identity as an operationally testable model. India’s regional diversity is thus at least partly explained by the variation in the length and depth of colonial rule, state formation and integration of the local economy with the wider world.

Conclusion

With the passage of the Independence of India Act in 1947, the Transfer of Power brought political power into Indian hands. Colonial rule ended, not through violent revolution, but through negotiation and contingency. The departing British took no responsibility for the violence during the Partition that accompanied Independence. When Independence came, India’s British-schooled leaders were able and willing to continue a mission of modernity and state formation that had been on course already for a century. With power, they also inherited the bitter legacy of the Partition and Indo-Pak conflict with its offshoots in the form of communal violence, and undefined national frontiers that would eventually lead to the India-China war of 1962 (Chapter 8).

The first modern political institutions introduced by the British such as the telegraph, rail and the police were part of an elaborate system that sustained colonial rule.⁴³ Those that came later—such as the civil service, elections under restricted franchise, the media, the judiciary and the legal profession, the universities and modern educational system—soon became the social base of the Indian middle class. Each of these institutions had a pyramidal structure with the British elites at the top.⁴⁴ After Independence, under the pressure of competitive politics, vote-hungry politicians inducted the excluded groups—the Hindu right, backward classes, some sections of the former untouchables and subjects of the former princely states that were not directly affected by colonial rule—into mainstream politics. These newly mobilized groups, as we shall see in Chapter 6, started questioning not only the policies of the generation of leaders who came to power immediately after Independence but in some cases also the institutions that were closely tied to their power and prominence in society.⁴⁵

The British legacy of constitutionalism—quickened through its adaptation to Indian conditions and the cultural context by a series of exceptionally gifted leaders—has had a better run in India than in its neighbouring countries. The chapter has analysed some of the reasons, focused particularly on the tradition of re-use of the past for the reinforcement of modern institutions that the British perfected for their own imperial purposes, and in departing, bequeathed to the leaders of the INC. These leaders were deeply schooled in British ways, partly through their own experience of the British educational system and, partly through their resistance to the colonial rule which obliged them to look for power and legitimacy through a deeper bonding with their own society. That was the case also with the leaders of Pakistan, but unlike the Muslim League which left India for the new homeland in Pakistan, the Congress party retained its deep roots in India's political soil and quickly developed an effective political and electoral machine following Independence (Chapter 4). Short of a similar vital bond in its new political arena, the Muslim League in Pakistan gradually atrophied, yielding place to military rule.

The analysis undertaken in this chapter also helps us understand how the British Raj achieved a masterful economy of force through the strategic accommodation of a part of the Indian population as their collaborators and intermediaries between the natives and their foreign rulers. Sections of Indian society which opposed the British were excluded from office, and not permitted to engage in political participation. Competitive political mobilization in the course of seven decades of vigorous inter-party competition has now ushered the excluded groups such as Hindu nationalists, *backward castes*, and *Dalits* into the political arena. For some of these previously excluded groups, the pre-modern past is not merely a museum piece, ensconced within the structure of modernity in a state of 'arrested decay', but a vital link to their own identity and culture which they would like to be made into a legitimate part of the public sphere. This argument has revived the pre-British political tradition and social linkages. In consequence, some of India's institutions that are part of the legacy of British rule, stand questioned. The induction of pre-modern practices and symbols into an institutional arrangement based primarily on modern politics has raised basic questions about the core values that underpin the political institutions which formed the basis of India's political system following the Transfer of Power. As such, the exegesis of British rule and the manner of Indian resistance to it are crucial to the understanding of both the stability of India's political system and the residual uncertainty that underlies it.

The distinct character of India's politics and salient features of India's constitution carry the imprint of her complex cultural and historical heritage. Continuity between India's pre-modern history and modern institutions is important in explaining the resilience of India's political system, as well as the diversity in levels of governance across different regions of India's continental expanse, and most crucially, the periodic outbreak of intense inter-community violence. The evolution of India's institutional arrangement, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, has been nurtured by a strategic re-use of the past. Conquerors have systematically plundered the best ideas and assets of the losers, set them up to new specifications, and claimed them as their own.⁴⁶ But the past also carries memories of loss that instigate the urge for revenge and create anxiety among the potential victims. These themes of institution-building and the hidden reservoirs of angst that blight them will be analysed in detail in the subsequent chapters on governance, and, its unravelling during inter-community riots. These form the two faces of India's politics.

Notes

- 1 See Subrata Mitra and Michael Liebig, *Kautilya's Arthashastra, An Intellectual Portrait—Classical Roots of Modern Politics in India* (Baden Baden: NOMOS; 2016).
- 2 *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Nandy 1983) is an evocative narrative of this foundational phase of modern India. The story of this ‘loss and recovery of self under colonial rule,’ in the evocative words of Ashis Nandy is a psychoanalyst’s explanation of the transformation in India’s political culture that came about in the course of British rule, as an outcome of conflict and collaboration between the rulers and the ruled.
- 3 Thus, for example, the system of land tenure known as the Permanent Settlement was worked out as an optimal solution for India’s agrarian problems, considering Indian conditions and the British experience.
- 4 Refer to Hegewald and Mitra (eds.) (2012) for application of the concept of re-use.
- 5 Schama (1989) makes this point with reference to the continuation of pre-revolutionary practices and symbols in post-revolutionary France.
- 6 In Hindu mythology, Bharata (Sanskrit: “The cherished”) is a legendary emperor and the founder of the Bhārata dynasty, whose empire stretched from the Himalayas to the Oceans. He is an ancestor of the Pandavas and the Kauravas in the Sanskrit epic, The Mahabharata. Though the Bhāratas are a prominent tribe in the Rigveda, the story of Bharata is first told in the Adi Parva of the Mahabharata, wherein he is the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. The story of his parents, and his birth, is also related in Kalidasa’s famous play, *Abhijñānashākuntala*.
- 7 There has been no equivalent of the European witch hunt in Indian history, nor of the long battle to establish the superiority of scientific knowledge over custom, magic and religion.
- 8 The past is kept alive in the Indian Sub-continent through ancestor worship which forms an important part of religious ritual. The governments have followed suit, by naming their missiles after mythical and historical figures. See Chapter 7.
- 9 For examples of the re-use—the incorporation of antecedent norms and structures into the structure of subsequent forms of art, sculpture and political institutions—see Hegewald and Mitra (2008).
- 10 By tracing the historical origin of deep conflicts, one can comprehend the role that past political choices have played in the origin of present conflicts, even as they appear to be timeless and traditional. Political analysis, leavened with the requisite knowledge of the path dependency of the present, affected by seminal events of the past, can help gather insights into the making of appropriate institutional designs for the future.
- 11 See Rudolph (1987). Also, ‘Introduction’ in Mitra (1990).
- 12 This is the subject of the feature film *Alexander*, directed by Oliver Stone in 2004, which breaks with tradition in terms of giving the Indian side the power and authority of a worthy and equal adversary to the all-conquering Greeks.
- 13 The signs of the lingering British presence—Sunday as the official holiday of the week, left-hand-drive vehicles, and the ubiquitous Ambassador car, a hybrid British Austin Rover adapted to Indian roads which has become the sturdy emblem of Indian officialdom—are everywhere. The Dak Bungalows, outposts of the British Raj in the country, temporary homes for the British civilian officers on tour, are tended with the same attention to detail by the PWD—the Public Works Department, also of British vintage—just as are the post-Independence guest houses of the national and State governments.
- 14 Metcalf (1998) makes this point in his interpretation of the decorative role of past artefacts in the modern architecture of Lutyen’s Delhi.
- 15 Metcalf (1998) sums up the reciprocal relation of Orientalism and Empire in the following passage:

Perhaps Curzon’s lamp [which he got designed in Egypt and arranged to be placed on the grave of Mumtaz in the Taj Mahal might be taken to represent the colonial aesthetic. It is an aesthetic of difference, of distance, of substantiation, of control—an aesthetic in which the Taj Mahal, the mosque of Cairo, even the *Arabian Nights*, all merge and become indistinguishable, and hence are available for use however the colonial ruler chooses. It is an aesthetic in which the past, though ordered with scrupulous attention

to detail, stays firmly in the past. It is an aesthetic Shah Jahan [the Mughal emperor who built the Taj Mahal at a memorium to Mumtaz Mahal, his deceased Queen] could never have comprehended.

ibid., p. 24

16 Nandy (1983), p. IX.

17 See Allen (1976).

18 Metcalf (1998), p. 18.

19 Nandy (1983), p. IX.

20 The point is made by Allen (1976, 18. See epigraph to this chapter). Gandhi used his understanding of the economy of force that the British generated through the mechanisms of accommodation, indirect rule and colonial order and put it to satyagraha—his chosen instrument of non-violent resistance—with insuperable skill. (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967, 158. See the epigraph to this chapter.)

21 Park and Bueno de Mesquita (1979), p. 21.

22 *Ibid.*

23 The title of the chief executive changed in 1858 to viceroy when the British Crown took over the running of the British Empire in India. See www.currentaffairsandgk.com/governors-generalvicerroys-in-india/ and www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Governor-General_of_India.

24 The logic of imperial expansion is best described by Tilly (1985). Tilly begins with a ‘warning’ about the nature of states. ‘If protection rackets represent crime at its smoothest, then war making and state making—quintessential protection rackets with the added advantage of legitimacy—qualify as our largest example of organized crime’ (*ibid.*: 169). Tilly then goes on to define the functions of states in terms of the following:

[1] *War making*: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force; [2] *State making*: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories; [3] *Protection*: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their *clients*; [4] *Extraction*: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities—war making, state making, and protection.

(*ibid.*: 181, emphasis added)

25 Refer to Stein (1982) for the definition of segmentary states.

26 “The East India Company as a modern capitalist corporation of an advanced bourgeois nation entrenched itself, like a parasite in the agrarian state dominated by a decaying military feudal regime. The parasite adjusted to the system of its host and benefited from it without changing it very much. The company was well geared to function in this way. It had developed a modern bureaucracy during its trading operations. This bureaucracy had all the characteristics of a modern civil service: a structured hierarchy and definite career patterns, free transferability, regular accounts and files regarding all administrative transactions, etc. Moreover, the company had a corporate memory. It could learn and correct mistakes; even a mediocre member of its service could contribute efficiently to this process, perhaps even more so than the brilliant exception to general rule”. Rothermund (1988, reprinted in 1993), p. 16.

27 British power in India came to be regarded after 1800 as ... an instrument for ensuring the necessary conditions of law and order by which the potentially vast Indian market could be conquered for British industry. This transformation of economic purpose carried with it a new, expansive and aggressive attitude, which the French, who were its later masters, termed that of ‘la mission civilisatrice’. The missionaries of English civilization in India stood openly for a policy of ‘assimilation’. Britain was to stamp her image upon India. The physical and mental distance separating East and West was to be annihilated by the discoveries of science, by commercial intercourse, and by transplanting the genius of English laws and English education. It was the attitude of English liberalism in its clear, untroubled dawn, and its most representative in both England and in India was Macaulay. Stokes (1959), pp. xii–xiv. Also see Said (1993), pp. xiii–xiv.

28 Said quotes; the French advocate of colonialism, Jules Harmand, who said in 1910: ‘It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior races and civilizations,

still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return. The basic legitimization of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity. Material power is nothing but a means to that end.' Said (1993), p. 16.

- 29 Bayly (1983). Also see Brown (1985).
- 30 This phenomenon has been described as 'de-industrialization'. See 'India's De-Industrialization under British Rule: New Ideas, New Evidence' by David Clingingsmith, Jeffrey G. Williamson, NBER Working Paper No. 10586. Issued in June 2004.
- 31 Brown (1985).
- 32 Mitra (1991a), Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), and Parekh (1989).
- 33 Gandhi coined the term. Though many believe that he derived it from passive resistance and civil Disobedience from the writings of Thoreau, South Africa, for Gandhi, satyagraha went far beyond mere passive resistance and became strength in practising non-violent methods. In his own writings in English, he preferred to use the word satyagraha directly, to indicate its positive and endogenous character.
- 34 See Nandy (1983).
- 35 See Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press; 2007) for a scholarly and unsparing analysis of the violent aftermath to the end of colonial rule. Khan's narrative skilfully weaves together stories of everyday life with political analysis.
- 36 Naoroji's 'drain theory'—which argued that British rule caused India's riches to be drained away to Britain—was one of the earliest formulations of this line of thinking.
- 37 Post-Independence formulations of the psychological and economic impacts of British rule have been more nuanced. See Nandy (1983) for the former and Moore (1966), Chapter 5, 'Democracy in Asia: India and the Price of Peaceful Change', for the latter.
- 38 See Brown (1985).
- 39 British manufactured textiles decimated the market for homemade cloth in India because of their competitive price. For the historical evidence of how it happened, see the 'Indian Textile Exhibition' in the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester. Personal communication, Julia Hegewald, 25 October 2008.
- 40 The *zamindari* system vested permanent rights of tax collection on designated landlords. However, instead of investing in agricultural development, the system encouraged exploitation of peasants by intermediaries between the zamindar and the peasant because of the growing pressure of population in a stagnant economy.
- 41 Hardgrave (1968).
- 42 See Chapter 4 (Tables 4.2 and 4.3) for the paradox of high trust in institutions but low trust of politicians.
- 43 Bayly (1996).
- 44 Misra (1961).
- 45 Indigenous forms of political protest such as 'satyagraha' had their origin in Indian resistance to the British Raj. The method of combining institutional participation with rational protest has become an integral part of India's political culture. That, as we shall see in Chapter 5, explains why protest in India does not necessarily turn into anti-system behaviour.
- 46 See Hegewald and Mitra (2008). The new conquerors, in turn, have fallen by the wayside, overtaken by new arrivals who have continued the same tradition of appropriation and reuse. In its own way, this has become an acceptable norm of Indian politics. If one marvels at the continuity of policy despite governmental change during the past two decades then the deep roots of this practice are to be found several years before Independence when British colonial officers and elected Indian politicians—adversaries and partners, once elections under the raj inducted Indian leaders into government—learnt to share office and exercise power jointly. The modern institutions of India, emerging from this process of long evolution, bear recognizable traces of the pre-modern past. See Mitra and Liebig, *Kautilya's Arthashastra: An Intellectual Portrait—Classical Roots of Modern Politics in India* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2016).

3 Politics and social change

From *homo hierarchicus* to an egalitarian and plural society

Mr. Gandhi is never so much disgusted as he is when he is confronted with the question of Majority versus Minority. He would like to forget it and ignore it. But circumstances will not let him do either and he is often forced to deal with the issue.

Ambedkar, *What the Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables* (1945), p. 268

The memory of Muli's humiliation stayed with me. I recalled similar incidents in my own country, and I wondered if the responses of untouchables to discrimination paralleled those of minorities in other countries. Was Muli indifferent to the insults he bore in silence? I hardly thought so; but I wondered how an ordinary untouchable like Muli survived economically, socially, and psychologically as a member of a despised group at the bottom of society. What were his joys, aspirations, and triumphs, as well as his humiliations? What would provoke someone like him to question the treatment he received from upper-caste people, to fight back?

Freeman, *Untouchable: An Indian Life Story* (1979), p. 5

Introduction

An analysis of social change in India is the main theme of this chapter. The discussion focuses on the traditional structure of the caste system and its transformation under the impact of political competition and key social legislation aimed at accelerating the pace of social change. These measures have set the pace for the transformation of India from a hierarchic to an egalitarian and plural society. These issues were central to the social agenda of India's Freedom Movement discussed in the previous chapter.¹ Still, despite radical changes that have come over since Independence, for many, caste continues to be the essential signifier of status in Indian society.

The narratives of Indian society from classical sources like the *Arthashastra*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and historical accounts of ancient India, depict everyday life as a busy beehive of activity, with individuals and groups bound together by a central norm and purpose. This organic bond, deftly conceptualised by Dumont (1970) as *homo hierarchicus*—the superiority of those with higher status over their social inferiors—was deeply affected by the introduction of individual rights and the right to equality under British colonial rule. Redolent of a value system radically different from the social hierarchy that underpinned the traditional caste system, this set off a process of dislocation and change.² This process of social transformation has been documented at great length by generations of social theorists and cultural anthropologists. They have observed its

manifestation in the local arenas of India's numerous villages. These developments have constituted the backdrop to the introduction of universal adult franchise, basic rights and entitlements to all citizens of India, guaranteed by the Constitution.

In this chapter, we analyse the interaction of some of the main cleavages of Indian society and their interaction with India's modern political institutions. These affect the political process and the pace of democratisation, both of which reach out to the inner life of individuals and groups, and unsettle the structures of power, status, wealth, opportunities, food, access to public amenities and social distance.³ The chapter draws on the social structure, social basis of power and the process of social mobility. In a relatively brief period and with little overt conflict, compared to similar transformations in pre-modern Europe, these efforts have radically transformed the hierarchical structure of India's traditional social system. The dialectic of power, status and politics explains why *caste* survives as a part of social life and ritual and why *caste networks* are still very much in evidence in electoral campaigns, housing and allocation of developmental resources. However, the *caste system*—once the epitome of social, economic and political dominance—is no longer what it used to be. Its functional basis—the hierarchy of status, power and wealth (described below in detail)—has been steadily challenged by the egalitarian logic of democracy and the market. The chapter illustrates this entanglement of social hierarchy, modern political institutions and competitive electoral mobilisation. This is done through the narration of these developments through an analysis of the social and political process, the changes induced by legislation and administrative action, and selected indicators from survey data.

From social hierarchy to egalitarian plurality

Box 1.1 in the introductory chapter has already provided a snapshot of India's diverse society. This heterogeneity is to be found in the social background of the Indian elite—an interlocking body of political leaders, civil servants, people in the liberal professions, captains of business and industry, and increasingly, leaders of the civil society—as well. This diversity in the holders of public office in India indicates how social status and political office are no longer a monopoly of those born to power and privilege. This is a testimony to social mobility in post-Independence India.⁴ Over the past seven decades, the democratic process, the growing economy, and legislative and administrative measures aimed at positive discrimination, have brought to the fore people with skills and ambition from social groups that were previously excluded from public office into the political arena, and in turn, these have given them a social prominence that they have not enjoyed traditionally. Social transformation has established a direct link between the state and the citizen, which, in turn, has enhanced the legitimacy of modern political institutions. Such an assertion, however, must take into consideration rural India, much of which, even after six decades of Independence remains beyond the pale of the media. This is where the bulk of the Indian population lives, and, as some would argue, steeped in age-old tradition, living out their lives within the small kin categories of kinship, caste, tribe and family, that are still tied together within an unequal social system. Many still see rural India in terms of *homo hierarchicus*; a social system where traditionally superior castes dominate those ritually inferior to them.⁵

Indian sociologists describe the traditional social system in terms of a concept called the *Jajmani* system. It is based on the reciprocal relationship between the Hindu householder (*Jajman*), his ritual superior and a cluster of occupational groups (see Figure 3.1).

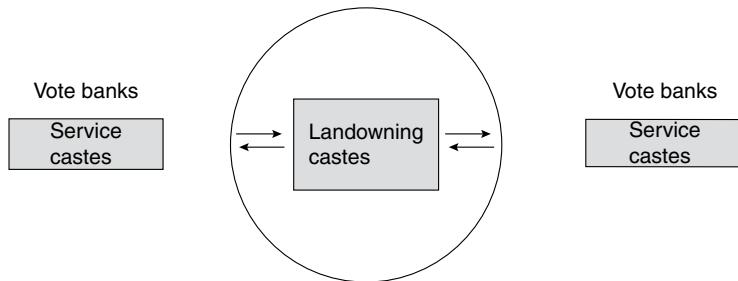


Figure 3.1 Jajmani system.

Source: Author's own.

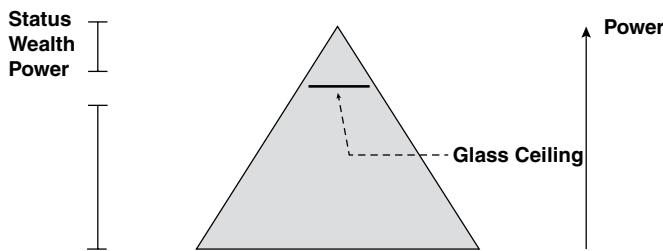


Figure 3.2 The social pyramid.

Source: Author's own.

At the centre of this exchange network are the landholding groups which share their products with service castes in exchange for their skills and labour. The services cover the entire spectrum of life; from priestly functions to agrarian production and the rituals associated with birth, marriage and death. In terms of power, the *Jajmani*- based social system can be conceptualized as a pyramid (Figure 3.2) where the components are arranged in terms of their status, with the upper social classes at the peak of the pyramid. The broad, social base is occupied by lower social groups.⁶

The spread of political consciousness, electoral mobility, legislation and administrative action, and social mobility brought about by economic change have combined to challenge the legitimacy of social dominance based on caste status alone. Stripped of the traditional belief in the superiority of the upper castes over the lower, the structure of social dominance has increasingly acquired the character of a glass ceiling, through which the dominated groups can see the top but from which they feel unjustly excluded (Figure 3.2). In many cases, this has led to considerable social strife. Often, the challenge to the social pyramid has come from within the local caste system, causing it to implode.⁷

The collapse of the traditional social pyramid, written into fundamental rights to equality and freedom and the prohibition of discrimination based on social origin in the Constitution, and ardently advocated by Nehru, has become a reality in seven decades since Independence. Transactional politics along with entrepreneurship have produced political depth and complexity, which have, in turn, helped transform constitutional intent to political reality.

The political agenda which underpins the process of social change in India took shape in the final years of colonial rule, with several social visions competing for attention. The Gandhian vision, for instance, argued in favour of a national political community based on social harmony.⁸ This was contested by those who saw in class consciousness and class conflict the only effective method of transition from hierarchy to an egalitarian society. Nehru sought to reconcile these two social philosophies in a liberal, socialist and democratic state, committed to progress through legislation, positive discrimination and social mobilization. The result has been an unprecedented measure of social transformation without the massive cost in human lives incurred in eighteenth-century Europe, post-revolutionary China or contemporary Africa.

India's Independence, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, coincided with the division of the country into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, carved out as a homeland for Muslims of British India, and the rump, renamed as the Republic of India. The Partition of British India on religious grounds, ineptly managed by the departing British, was violent and chaotic. Bitter inter-community riots marked the refugee trails that criss-crossed the new borders in the East and the West. Another political change that was to have deep and enduring social implications was brought about by the integration of princely states, roughly six hundred in all (see Map 2.1), which, with the transfer of paramountcy, acquired the right to choose their future political affiliation. The great majority, with the notable exception of Kashmir and Hyderabad, chose to merge with either India or Pakistan. The merger was an opportunity by some residents of the princely states who had chafed under the feudal customs, and lack of social and economic opportunities. However, it was a trauma for large sections of the subjects of princely rulers who felt threatened by competition from the residents of erstwhile British India, who were better placed to take advantage of the new political and economic opportunities. In either case, residents of the former princely states were suddenly catapulted into a new world of new weights and measures, political rights and opportunities, and anxiety born out of the likelihood of the loss of status and privilege in the face of competition from the lower social classes and the new arrivals from the relatively more developed British India. This, as we shall see later in this book, had the paradoxical consequence of some dispossessed members of the princely order entering the democratic political process at the head of conservative political parties.

The first decade after Independence (1947–57) was marked by efforts at refugee settlement, and administrative attempts to cope with the massive dislocation caused by the Partition. Added to the problems of relocating millions of transients, inter-community strife, and the merger of princely states, there were new forms of political mobilization led by land-hungry peasants under the leadership of radical Marxists and vote-hungry politicians, seeking to draw their support through radical promises. A new dimension was added by political parties in search of new constituencies, fanning out from the parts of India already accustomed to electoral politics, to the newly integrated hinterland. Finally, the government of India itself generated radical expectations through a slew of egalitarian legislations aimed at reinforcing the rights of industrial workers and peasants and the abolition of *zamindaris* and untouchability. The process of radical change through strategic social and economic reform has become the backbone of political change in India. (Box 3.1). Policies of rural development, planning, and positive discrimination, administered by new bureaucracies specially commissioned for the purpose, have reinforced the process of democratic social change.

BOX 3.1 KEY SOCIAL LEGISLATIONS (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

- Industrial Disputes Act, 1947
- Untouchability Offences Act, 1955
- Hindu Code Act, 1956
- Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986
- The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989
- The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution 1992 (introduction of women's quota in panchayat elections)
- National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992
- The National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
- Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007
- Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2010
- National Food Security Act (2013)⁹

Indian society, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, was deeply affected by British rule which unleashed changes in many key areas of life across the country. First, though the British became weary of direct intervention in Indian life after the Mutiny of 1857, reform initiatives like the ban on Sati (ritual of a widow burning herself at the pyre of her deceased husband) and widow remarriage affected the core of Hindu orthodoxy. In the second place, the rule of law—and legal codes such as the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) insisted on equality before the law—posed a direct challenge to social hierarchy. However, the third measure that shook the foundations of Indian tradition was the most important and complex. To enhance the efficiency of civil administration, the British government had required a lot of statistical information about population. Thus, was born the decennial Census of India which, starting in 1881, required Indians to identify themselves in terms of categories, such as family seen as a unit, property, caste, and religion. These concepts, mostly western in provenance, soon initiated a dynamic of their own. Categories such as caste and language that were specially innovated to suit the Indian context, once enumerated, induced a static character to a dynamic social process. In other words, the sheer fact of enumeration injected a measure of rigid categories into the fluid Indian social process. While the traditional methods of social mobility, which M.N. Srinivas, (one of the leading sociologists of modern India) has conceptualized as *sanskritization*, had permitted a degree of upward social mobility, albeit over several generations, the census-inspired castes and tribes became rigid, static categories, connected to one another within the caste system. Lower social groups who were on the way up economically, tried to have themselves categorized under new names, thinking that would give them higher social status. Though this form of status enhancement was not always a successful strategy, it nevertheless introduced a new political process regarding status-seeking in colonial India.¹⁰

The Anti-Brahmin movement of South India in the 1920s brought together many such local challenges to social hierarchy. Following Independence and the enactment of social legislation aimed at combating social hierarchy, political challenges to upper-caste hegemony spread to North India. The new administrative and juridical bodies such as

the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribals, and the Minorities Commission gave the necessary political and moral impetus to these early stirrings of resentment against social inequality. Propelled by these early developments, Indian society, seen in terms of status ranking, resembles a mosaic in motion, where one can distinguish different mobile pieces, without a central pattern to it. The variation in this overall picture becomes intelligible when one takes the local and regional diversity in social history and political conditions into account.

The key to many of the issues arising out of India's politics is to be found in the interaction of India's traditional institutions and social diversity, and the modern democratic political process based on 'one man, one vote' principle, on the other. The result is the creation of an 'Indian mosaic'; an apparently indecipherable patchwork of overlapping groups, customs, mores, languages and belief systems that have often been called the 'Indian mosaic'. A brief perusal of a national newspaper on any given day is likely to yield a rich harvest of social conflict, assertion of regional autonomy, and communal conflagration. However, these conflicts take place in the context of a national community that both reinforces and questions the sense of regional separateness. These contradictory and converging pictures help explain why, despite a culture traditionally based on social hierarchy and patriarchy, steeped in mass poverty and high illiteracy, India has so resolutely and relentlessly moved towards a resilient democratic political order.

Caste and politics

Castes are endogamous status groups, traditionally based on hereditary occupations. The word entered Indian usage from its origin in the Portuguese word *casta*—which is how the early Portuguese traders referred to *jatis*, the generic term—to describe social stratification in India. Though *jatis* are derivatives of Hindu social practice, they are not exclusive to Hinduism. There are caste-like groupings among Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Jains as well.

Castes are organized into local and regional 'caste systems' in which they are ranked and tied together in a complex reciprocal relationship, based on the core idea of purity and pollution. The British codification of the caste system was based on the reading of holy texts written by Brahmins, glorifying their own role and power. Once codified, castes became fixed, rigid categories, for the decennial census and administration. The ground reality was something else. Indian society was different from feudal Europe in terms of the flexibility of social differentiation. In pre-modern India, manufacturing and agriculture were differentiated, and tradesmen thrived. That an indigenous capitalist class did not emerge came across to the early theorists of class as puzzling. Max Weber explains this puzzling coexistence of entrepreneurship, and failure of a capitalist class to rise in terms of the role of the caste system, as a transmission belt which transformed surplus wealth not into investment in productivity but into spirituality. Bendix, citing Weber, tells us:

The people of Asia are notorious all over the world for their unlimited and unequalled greed.... But the point is that this "acquisitive drive" is pursued by all the tricks of the trade and with the aid of that cure-all; magic. In Asia the element was lacking which was decisive for the economy of the Occident, namely *the sublimation and rational utilization of this emotional drive which is endemic in the pursuit of gain....* (Emphasis added).¹¹

As Weber saw it, the popular belief was framed by the dominance of cultural and religious life by the high-caste elites at the top. '[C]ertain common denominators of Indian religion—the belief in reincarnation, the idea of retribution (*karma*), and the identification of virtue with ritual observance— influenced the masses through the social pressures of the caste system' (Bendix 1960: 195f).

Once the concept of caste became the basis of the official British view of India, the category acquired a life of its own. As we have already seen, the census became a means of upward mobility. For their own part, having codified the differentiation of Indian society in terms of the caste system, the British could depict Indian society as a noble classical civilization in a state of 'arrested decay' where their role was to help the minorities and untouchables by setting up official canons for positive discrimination. The whole idea of giving additional privileges officially to a segment of the population—known by the new terms of 'Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)' that merit it—came to dominate colonial India from 1858 onwards. From Independence onwards, the revival of the pre-modern norms in Indian politics has led, on the one hand, to a questioning of the British categories of caste, while on the other hand, the race to compete for scarce resources has reinforced the caste system as a category of social differentiation.

Local castes, or *jatis*, are the basic social units that still govern marriages, social networks, food taboos, and rituals in most parts of rural India. Even in towns, when caste sometimes forms the basis of the choice of residence or professional networks, whole neighbourhoods might belong to particular castes. In the past, caste regulated the choice of occupation as well, which was typically caste-specific and hereditary at the same time. This has changed rapidly because of modernization and urbanization. In addition, competitive examinations for entry into the civil service, where former untouchables and tribals have a quota, have opened top jobs that once were the prerogative of the upper castes.

There are more than 2,000 *jatis* in India, traditionally divided into four hierarchically ranked broad categories called *varnas*: (1) the Brahmins, who originally performed the traditional function of priests; (2) the Kshatriyas, who were the rulers and the warriors; (3) the Vaishyas, who were the mercantile classes; and (4) the Sudras, who were the service groups, agriculturists and artisans. Untouchable castes were outside the Hindu *varna* system. Mahatma Gandhi, in an effort, to integrate them with the Hindu society, called them *Harijans*—children of God. This has now been replaced with the more radical term *Dalit*—meaning the suppressed ones. Originally, the caste system presupposed the interdependent relationship of occupational groups, referred to as the *Jajmani* system.¹² *Jatis* were linked to one another through ties of reciprocal economic, social, and political obligation. In the centre of this scheme of reciprocity stood social groups with controlling interests in land, whom other castes provided with services, and from whom they received a share of the harvest. The relationship of the lower castes to the high-caste landowners was hereditary, but their dependent status also carried some traditional rights such as distress relief at the time of natural calamities. All behaviour within the system, however, emphasized social hierarchy and inequalities of power, wealth, and status. Control over land was the critical lever of social status and power. These oppressive aspects of the caste system have been increasingly contested by those at the bottom of the pyramid, particularly the former untouchables and the lower castes mentioned in the Constitution, respectively, as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

Looking at high-profile national politicians like Mayawati or Laloo Prasad Yadav, whose power and prominence follow partly from their trenchant contestation of the

dominance of the upper castes, one might get the impression that the problem of untouchability has passed. However, for millions like Muli—the untouchable protagonist of Freeman (1979, see epigraph at the beginning of the chapter) narrative of everyday life of an Indian untouchable—social discrimination is still a constant presence. The former untouchables are often excluded from social interaction with the four *varnas*, traditionally because of the ‘polluting’ nature of their occupation as scavengers. They number more than 135 million people and make-up about one-sixth of India’s population. Attempts to elevate them into full membership in society through legislation, affirmative action, and competitive politics have accelerated since Independence. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), currently the most important advocate of *Dalit* self-assertion, is an important factor in the politics of northern India. It has placed many of its members in major ministerial positions, thanks to the strategy of forging broad-based political coalitions. The strategy of the BSP is to build a coalition of the top and bottom-most layers of society against the middle castes.

Many Indians see the caste system as the cause of India’s social fragmentation and economic backwardness. But castes are also the only basis of identity and social interaction for vast numbers of people. Democracy and economic change have, thus, sometimes worked at cross-purposes, creating conflict, fragmenting large castes into new social groups, and fusing several existing groups into caste associations. As new opportunities for enterprise and political linkage open, castes are increasingly the basis of community formation. The new ‘political caste’ is an instrument for the promotion of collective interest by social groups who come together for that purpose. The instrumental role that caste plays in raising consciousness and electoral mobilization actually undermines the ideological basis of social hierarchy and helps question the more odious aspects of caste domination.¹³ The politics of North India has been dominated in recent decades by political parties dominated, respectively, by Dalits (former untouchables) and the ‘Backward Classes’, who usually belong to the Sudras, the lowest *varna*.¹⁴ The situation of India’s aborigines known as tribals (who represent 8.2 percent of the population) parallels that of the former untouchables. The colonial policy of declaring tribal areas as reserved or ‘scheduled areas’, where tribal lands could not be easily acquired by non-tribals has increasingly come under pressure because of the expansion of the market, population growth and political mobilization, causing resentment among tribals. Although tribals exist all over India, and some tribal groups living in non-tribal areas have caste-like status, the majority are concentrated in three main regions; the North-East (in Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh), the hill areas of Central India, and Western India. Overall, these regions are socially and economically backward, but the spirit of political competition pervades them as well. Movements for the creation of autonomous regions and the spread of Maoist violence are indicative of this tribal self-assertion.

Religions of India: ‘unity in diversity’

The constitution of India recognizes a diversity of cultures, creeds, and religions, none of which is accorded a status of superiority over the others. That makes India, in terms of the formal structure of the country, a multicultural and multireligious state. The word ‘secular’ was inserted into the Preamble to the Constitution in 1976. In Indian usage, it implies both a wall of separation between the church and the state and an equal status to all religions. Consequently, though in terms of the data generated by India’s decennial census, India is a Hindu ‘majority’ country (79.8 percent of the population

are Hindus; see Box 1.1), this fact alone does not give a special status or hegemony to Hinduism. Hindus themselves are divided into many sects and denominations as well, to the point where some scholars question the status of Hinduism as a distinctive religion altogether (Sontheimer and Kulke 1989). Additionally, all other major religions of the world are present in India as well. In three smaller Indian States—Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram—there is a Christian majority, in Punjab a Sikh majority, and in Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim majority. However, the rapid rise of the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a reminder of the political power of pan-Indian Hinduism as an ideology (Chapter 6). The idea of a politically mobilized Hindu majority threatening the plural and democratic character of the political process is a source of some consternation among India's minorities (see Table 3.1).¹⁵

India's political process is robust and inclusive enough to inject a degree of moderation to extreme sectional demands. The logic of electoral politics, as we shall see later in this chapter, accounts for both the origin of such movements and, once in power, for the moderation of their more extreme demands (Malik and Singh 1992: 318–36). In addition, cultural plurality is an integral part of Hinduism. Its many sects and their separate traditions influence one another, leading to the growth of new forms.¹⁶ Many Hindus believe in the concept of 'unity in diversity' which permits the existence of plural belief systems, rituals and networks. While from the outside Hinduism appears as a vast phalanx that is internally undifferentiated and externally bounded, it is far from being so. It has a rich diversity despite attempts to standardize ritual and social practice.¹⁷ Each cultural-linguistic area has its own 'little' tradition and local gods, and it is within the local sects that most Hindus live their religious life. The classical ideals of Hinduism and local traditions have freely interacted with each other, and in some cases, even with Muslims, leading to the syncretistic Sufi tradition, and to the growth of regional traditions and cross-regional movements.

Table 3.1 Religion in India

<i>Religious group</i>	1961*		2001		2011	
	<i>Number (million)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number (million)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number (million)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Hindus	366.5	83.5	827.6	80.5	966.3	79.8
Muslims	47.9	10.7	138.2	13.4	172.2	14.2
Christians	10.7	2.4	24.1	2.3	27.8	2.3
Sikhs	7.8	1.8	19.2	1.9	20.8	1.7
Buddhists	3.2	0.7	8	0.8	8.4	0.7
Jains	2	0.5	4.2	0.4	4.5	0.4
Other**	1.6	0.4	6.6	0.6	7.9	0.7
Total	439.2		1028.6		1210.9	

*Excludes Mizo district, now part of Mizoram.

**Including persons not identified by religion.

Source: 1991: *India 1998: A Reference Annual*. New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, p. 17, and Tata Services Limited, Department of Economic Statistics, *Statistical Outline of India, 2004–2005*. Mumbai: Tata Services Limited, Department of Economic Statistics, January 2005, p. 34.

2001: Census of India 2001: Data on Religion, Government of India (Office of the Registrar General), retrieved 23 January 2009.

2011: Census of India 2011: Data on Religion, Government of India (Office of the Registrar General), retrieved 30th August 2015.

An earlier generation of Indian analysts thought that religious beliefs impeded the functioning of the modern state and economy.¹⁸ Religion, some held, was a major obstacle to social transformation. By an extension of the same argument, they believed that with modernization, religion would decline in importance.¹⁹ In contrast, as one can notice from the political mobilization of religious minorities, religion can also become a political vehicle for mobilisation. It can impart a sense of identity to social groups feeling discriminated against or threatened by other groups. This confluence between the search for identity and political competition is seen in many ways (Mitra 2005a: 77–96). When adherents of a religion are regionally concentrated, such as Sikhs in Punjab and Muslims in Kashmir, there is a convergence of religion and regional identity. This generates a corresponding demand that the regional government incorporate the sacred beliefs of the religion, which, in turn, severely stretches the limit of the secular state in India (Mitra 1991a: 755–77).

Hindu nationalist movements extend this logic by demanding the embodiment of Hindu cultural symbols and beliefs within the structure of the modern state at the national level. In general, political parties and movements that draw their strength from religious beliefs and aspirations are quite strong in political and cultural self-assertion. Following their impressive gains in the parliamentary elections of 1996 and 1998, at the expense of the centrist forces (the communist vote has remained low but stable), Hindu nationalist parties have formed the government at the centre and in several states. The result of the 2004 parliamentary elections which voted the Hindu-nationalist NDA coalition out of power at the Centre, appeared to have arrested the growth curve of Hindu nationalism. The results of the parliamentary election of 2009 showed a reinforcement of the position of the Congress at the core of the UPA coalition, which won the support of a majority in the Lok Sabha, and was invited by the President to form the new government. The BJP, however, continued to be the main opposition party in the Parliament. The 2014 parliamentary elections saw the return of Hindu nationalism to power at the Union level, forming the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Religion, particularly the exclusive right to places of worship and the right to stage religious processions in a religiously mixed neighbourhood, is one of the main causes of conflict in India today.²⁰

North India is dotted with mosques that stand next to Hindu temples, or are built on spots where Hindu temples once stood. This shows the residual legacy of the Muslim conquest of India from the eighth century onward. Many of these structures are now at the centre of the religious storm that, judging from the Gujarat riots of 2002,²¹ continues to incite religious fervour and political passion.

Muslims today constitute over 14.2 percent of the Indian population. It is difficult to talk in terms of a national Muslim community because India's Muslims speak many different languages, and are divided by class, sect, and social stratification, much like their Hindu fellow-citizens. However, despite this social heterogeneity, the Muslims of India are a vocal, and increasingly assertive and politically organized minority (Mitra 2005a). The demand for a separate homeland for Muslims by the Muslim League during the British colonial rule led to the Partition of British India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947, a new state with the explicit purpose of becoming the homeland of South Asia's Muslims. About two-thirds of the Indian Muslims and the bulk of the leaders of the Muslim League left India for Pakistan following the Partition. Over the past decades, the political void that Partition left behind has been largely filled by the emergence of a new generation of Muslim leaders. Muslim representation in legislative bodies and in

public life has grown since Independence, and political competition has enhanced the sense of group assertion and a substantial increase in the scale, intensity, and geographic spread of Hindu-Muslim conflict.

Sikhism—born about 400 years ago as a resistance movement against Islamic invaders—took on many of the theological and organizational features of both Hinduism and Islam. Some Sikhs felt that their identity is threatened by modernization and assimilation with Hinduism. They envisioned the creation of a sovereign Khalistan state as an exclusive homeland for Sikhs. Although a tenuous majority in the North Indian State of Punjab, the status has constantly been depleted through emigration of enterprising Sikhs to other parts of India and abroad. Punjab has also been home to the Akali Dal, a Sikh political party, which was a part of the NDA coalition (Jeffrey 1986). The party which once had separatist aspirations became a party of the establishment. Some Sikhs also feared the further loss of the Sikh majority in ‘their homeland’ because of the influx of non-Sikhs from poorer parts of India, attracted to Punjab by better wages. Others perceived further threats to Sikh identity and traditions from new habits being inculcated by the youth through modernization, and from the growth of revisionist sects within Sikhism. These anxieties fuelled a political movement that took an increasingly violent turn, leading to the army’s siege of the Golden Temple in the holy city of Amritsar, which had become the fortified headquarters of the Sikh separatists. The military operation against the Golden Temple—known as Operation Blue Star—subsequently led to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984 (Singh 1993: 84–105). However, a firm combination of repression of dissidents and accommodation of some of their leaders has seen relative peace return to Punjab. The case of Punjab thus reveals the challenges that a multi-religious society poses to political stability and its solutions.

The political diversity of India is also enriched by its modern associations, trade unions, and all kinds of movements in which people come together for obtaining a material advantage. Group formation has frequently led to inter-community strife, initiated or exacerbated by groups promoting their shared interest. Social solidarity has become an important means of political mobilization. Political groups, which are created out of fission and fusion of traditional social groups, define their newly found identity as a mechanism for gaining benefits.

The absence of nationwide, cohesive, homogeneous ethnic groups has impeded the growth of an equivalent kind of tribal politics, which has stymied the growth of democracy and modern institutions in many post-colonial democracies. Except for Kashmir, the Indian state has contained separatist movements through a combination of firmness and flexibility. The direction and pace of the process depend largely upon the leadership that emerges, the nature of its demands, and how effective the central and regional governments are in dealing with them. India, with all its diversity, has been relatively successful in managing and containing these conflicts through a process of political bargaining, accommodation and institutional change (Mitra 1995: 57–78).

Language

Along with caste and religion, language is one of the key components of identity. Language is also one of the main social cleavages in South Asia, as one can see in the role that linguistic nationalism played in the break-up of Pakistan, leading to the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, and the role of ‘Sinhala’ nationalism in fomenting civil war in

Sri Lanka. India's 18 major languages, each of which has evolved over the course of many centuries, are concentrated in different regions. Consequently, the mother tongue has become the focus of regional identity. Although Hindi is common in northern India, the different regions (and sub-regions) have their distinct dialects. Many are very highly developed and have their own distinguished literary traditions. In the 1920s, sub-national loyalties based on language developed simultaneously with the nationalist movement. One of the persistent demands of the INC was thus to redraw the map of British India along linguistic lines. Indeed, the Congress itself was organized on the basis of regional languages as early as 1920. Later, in 1956, the administrative map of India was redrawn, and since then Indian States have been reorganized based on mother tongue (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). The elevation of the main vernacular to the status of official language of the region has reinforced the multinational character of the Indian political system. Indian languages can be divided into two main groups: the Indo-Aryan languages of the North (that is, Punjabi, Hindi, Kashmiri, Bengali, among others) and the Dravidian languages of the south (that is, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam). The largest single language in India is Hindi, which, along with English, is also recognized as an official link language of India. The languages of North India all have a common 'Sanskritic' base. A complex three-language formula gives Hindi the status of the national language while equalizing the chances of non-Hindi speakers of India for public services by conceding English the status of a link language. Regional languages are the main medium for official transactions within regions. Linguistic movements in India have, thus, contributed to the greater differentiation of the political system as well as to the overall legitimacy of the state, without, at the same time, damaging the basis of national integration.

Languages are linked to one another through dialects and bridge languages. Hindi and Urdu have spread widely over North India, and increasingly, in the South and the North-East, thanks to the film industry. English has stayed on, very much a link language and an international window, thanks to the wide use of the English language in worldwide communication and has become an important asset for India.

Social class

Unlike China, Vietnam or Cambodia, despite the presence of both mass poverty and radical politics, India did not develop a national revolutionary peasant movement prior to Independence. When radical movements inspired by Marxism appeared in southern India shortly after India's Independence, and in West Bengal in the 1960s, they did not spread to other parts of the country. The nature of colonial rule and Indian resistance to it, particularly the role of Gandhi, the Indian class structure, and the country's social fragmentation are responsible for the muted nature of class conflict in India. The slow pace of industrialization and urbanization has led to a highly uneven pattern of class formation, and castes, tribes, and ethnic groups that cut across class lines. Cross-cutting cleavages, the catch-all character of India's political parties and the formation of broad-based political coalitions have further mitigated the sharpness of social polarization on an enduring basis. This pattern has severely inhibited the development of class identities and political mobilization based on class appeals.

India's slow industrialization is indicated by the fact that the industrial working class is quite small. Only a small segment of it is unionized. The wages and services of these unionized workers are protected by strong labour legislation. Surrounded by workers in

insecure jobs, unionized labour constitutes a veritable labour ‘aristocracy’. India’s rural class system is also quite complex. The land reforms of the 1950s eliminated some, but not all, intermediaries between the state and the farmer. In their place, there emerged a powerful new rural force composed of a mixed-status group of middle-peasant cultivators. These middle peasants, described by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (1987) as ‘bullock capitalists’, control 51 percent of the agricultural land, constituted 35 percent of the rural households, and 25 percent of the total population of India (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987: 49). They form a powerful political force in rural India. Championed by peasant parties like the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in the 1960s and the Lok Dal in the 1970s, they have challenged urban interests, upper-caste-dominated parties, and the formally dominant position of the older social notables and *former zamindars*. However, with the independent mobilization of the former untouchables, who constitute the social layer just below, their position has gradually begun to be challenged and given rise to new cross-class, multi-caste coalitions.

The landless and small landowners (those holding fewer than 2.5 acres of land), divided by caste as well as class lines, in States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, do not share a common interest. The small landowners also do not identify with the needs and aspirations of the rural landless population. Under the pressure of mechanization, which requires a larger unit of production, the pressure on land has increased, leading to more landlessness. The dominant social groups are being challenged in some parts of India through the independent political organization of the former untouchables who in most cases are landless agricultural workers. Such movements as, for example, the *Dalit* movements in Western India and the BSP in Northern India, constitute an important challenge to the dominance of the upper social strata. Like caste, gender has increasingly emerged as one of the salient dimensions of politics and public policy in India.

Gender

The situation of women in Indian society is characterized by numerous inequalities and disadvantages that are engrained in a systematic way. Despite a quota system which, since the 73rd amendment of the Indian constitution makes the allocation of one-third of all elected seats at the local level of rural self-government obligatory, women continue to be left out of the making of significant, political decisions. Despite the national prominence accorded to women such as Sonia Gandhi, the President of the venerable INC and Chairperson of the ruling UPA coalition, or Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, the former President of India, or several prominent women Chief Ministers like Sheila Dikshit of Delhi, Mayawati of Uttar Pradesh, Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal or Jayalalitha of Tamil Nadu, women overall have lagged in practically all walks of life. Maltreatment and violence against girls and women occur not only in the domestic realm but also in the public sphere, appearing rather as a norm than the exception.

Economic exploitation of the female workforce is a common phenomenon, especially in the so-called backward “Hindi belt”, comprising the northern States of India. The situation of women in the Southern Indian States seems to be better and appears to be related to the generally higher level of education in states like Kerala. The level of abuse and violation of gender justice are also reflected in the infant mortality rate amongst girls, which is much higher than that of boys. In 2012, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) released data that indicated a girl child in India aged 1–5 years is 75 percent more likely to die than an Indian boy

(in 2005 it was 61 percent), making this the worst gender differential in child mortality worldwide. Similar gender-based discrimination can be found in other sectors too, particularly in education, from which many girls are denied access, in order to support the families. In this context, one should note that besides a North-South divide regarding social, economic and political conditions, there is also a tremendous difference between urban and rural areas. Due to a lack of information and widespread poverty, the situation of women remains at a significantly low level. Nevertheless, one can state that in many areas the situation of women is improving and that rights for the female citizenry are getting more recognition.²² A most important factor continues to be the country's vibrant civil society with numerous active NGO's working towards reducing the deeply entrenched gender discrimination in Indian society. The 73rd amendment of the Constitution of India, introducing a quota of one-third of the seats in India's half million village councils, has now been in operation for close to three decades and has spawned a whole new generation of women leaders at the local level. A similar provision to introduce a quota for women in state assemblies and the Parliament is currently under discussion.

In summary, from a comparative perspective, India comes across as a highly pluralistic and segmented society, where the twin processes of modernization and democratization have transformed a hierarchical society into groups that see themselves as legitimate political actors. The groups themselves, are short-term coalitions. As such, fission—the differentiation of groups—and fusion—the temporary coming together of different groups—are the rule. Cross-class and multi-caste organizations do not necessarily have a national structure because social networks are often confined to region and locality. Regions have increasingly acquired their own distinct identity in terms of economic and political status, and cross-regional coalitions deeply influence the course of national politics.

Political culture

Despite mass poverty (India's per capita GNP in terms of purchasing power parity is about 3.4 percent of that of the United States) and low literacy (74.04 percent according to the 2011 census), India has sustained the democratic form of government adopted at Independence over the past six decades. The hiatus between these two important 'pre-conditions' of democracy and Indian reality is puzzling. To explain this phenomenon, it is necessary to analyse the political attitudes that underpin political behaviour in Indian society and how people came to acquire them. See Box 3.2.

The entanglement of modern institutions and pre-modern practices, belief systems and symbols is an important component of India's political culture. In his introduction to India's political culture, Morris-Jones explains this phenomenon in terms of coexistence of three idioms; namely, the modern, the traditional, and the saintly (Morris-Jones 1987: 58) at the core of India's political culture. The modern idiom recognises politics as a competitive process of articulation and aggregation of interests. This modern idiom of Indian politics consists of the Constitution and the courts, parliamentary debate, the higher administration, the upper levels of all the main political parties, and the entire English press and much of the Indian language press. The main debates of Indian politics—on issues of federalism, economic development, planning or defence expenditure, for example—take place in the modern language of politics, and as such are accessible to Western students of Indian politics.²³

BOX 3.2 THE RIGHT TO VOTE: POWER OF THE POWERLESS

The following press statement provides an insight into the empowerment of the powerless through the electoral process. A 55-year-old Dalit woman, ‘pointing to the stain of the indelible ink on her fingers’, says, ‘I voted for Laloo.’ The reporters point to the gaping cracks on her roof, her grandchild who [has] nothing to wear, the medicine she does not have, the two meals she cannot afford, and ask, ‘Why?’ She replies, ‘All that has been there for thousands of years.’ Saying this, she remembers the day the chief minister’s helicopter landed on the nearby paddy field. ‘Laloo came to visit us,’ she announces. ‘Since I was born, not even a crow has flown over our village.’ The second report is equally revealing. A 45-year-old landless labourer, when asked about Laloo breaks into what looks like a strange dance. He falls on his knees **and** with hands stretched in front, presses his flat forehand against the ground and begins to crawl backwards. ‘Now I don’t do this when my landlord walks by, he shouts, ‘Because Laloo said so.’

Source: Raj Kamal Jha and Farzand Ahmed, ‘Laloo’s Magic’, *India Today*, 30 April 1995.

The political discourse of Indian leaders, even in the case of those who see themselves as advocates of modernity, is often replete with traditional concepts like *jati* or *Dalits* or *parampara* (custom) that are deeply embedded in Indian religions and values like *shaheed* (martyrs) or *ahimsa* (non-violence). The saintly idiom mobilized with insuperable skill by Gandhi’s *satyagraha* reflects on the core values of society that cut across both modern and traditional cleavages but does not necessarily refer to the spiritual or the otherworldly. Messages from leaders like Gandhi expressed in this mode could reach the whole society and ‘stir the imagination of the advanced radical and the conservative traditionalist alike’.²⁴ The appeal of these traditional symbols continues to exercise a powerful influence on popular imagination. Though the three idioms of politics are conceptually distinct, they are entangled and not necessarily distinct. In fact, the same individual may combine all three; a computer engineer, trained at the University of California, based in Bengaluru, might have daily transactions with his business partner in California’s Silicon Valley. He might have an arranged marriage within his *jati* and linguistic region and follow the food taboos and social rituals of his caste punctiliously. He might also belong to an internet network, avidly exchanging messages with the worldwide network of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the World Council of Hindus. Depending on the region, locality, length and depth of colonial rule, and the individual’s class, gender, and age, one idiom may be more clearly pronounced than another. Strategic political actors manipulate all those idioms in terms of their perception of cases and contexts. Consequently, the three appear as functionally related to one another in the competitive political marketplace of India. The ethnic network can very well carry the modern message of individual rights, entitlement, and electoral preferences to people who are first-generation voters. Simultaneously modern satellite television, broadcasting the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Hindu religious classics, can spread the

message of an indigenous Indian identity that claims to be unique, authentic and exclusive. Since Independence, such interactions have led to the creation of new political forms and processes as well as to the emergence of two new themes of Indian political culture: the instrumental value of traditional concepts for modern politics and the politics of identity.

Indians use a wide variety of forms of political participation such as voting, lobbying and contacting civil servants and leaders, and failing these (or sometimes in addition to these), the coercive methods of direct action. These forms are found all over the country, in areas where European powers first settled 400 years ago as well as in those that have never had any direct experience of European rule; among affluent elites well versed in the form of modern politics as well as among the poorest, illiterate peasants who were mobilized into electoral politics after Independence. Reports in the Indian media bear witness to such widespread attitudes of empowerment by village women or marginalised peasants.

The simultaneous use of participation and protest, drawing upon modern institutions and traditional symbols and networks, has caused the three idioms of politics—the modern, traditional and saintly—to conflate. Consequently, the political process in India acts as a channel for the expression of collective protest and eventually, a source of moulding a new identity. The power and position of the English-speaking elite that had hitherto seen itself as urban, urbane, and secular are contested, but more Indians send their children to English-medium primary and junior schools than ever before. This search for identity expresses itself not only in terms of national movements like those associated with Hindu nationalism but also in the assertion of Sikh identity in Punjab and the tribal Jharkhand identity in southern Bihar, now given constitutional recognition in the form of the new federal State of Jharkhand. Similar aspirations for welfare and identity also underpin politics in Kashmir and India's North-East, violently clashing against the Indian state in their determination to assert their own vision of the state and nation.

Open articulation of such discord and violent clashes over interest and identity might give the impression that there is no central or unifying theme behind political attitudes in India, no 'Indian way' of doing things. In the heyday of India's freedom movement, Gandhi and the Congress defined this central thrust of India's political culture. After Independence, Nehru and the Congress government articulated the core values of India's political culture in terms of secularism, socialism and democracy. Seven decades later, the Congress party and its programme no longer occupy that central place it once held.²⁵ Instead, the political system is uneasily groping towards a redefinition of India's core values in terms of communal accommodation, capitalism, and democracy. Once in power, cultural-nationalist parties have downplayed separatist themes like a Tamil homeland, or an exclusive homeland for the 'sons of the soil', and they have gradually accommodated themselves within the Indian Union. The Communist Party of India (CPI), in power in West Bengal for three decades, until 2012, has also been trying to accommodate itself within the new political culture of enterprise.²⁶ The tribulations of Hindu nationalism on this score—the parliamentary leadership trying to appear moderate and reaching out to the minorities while the fringe elements fanning intolerance by seeking to re-convert people who left the fold of Hinduism for Islam, Christianity or Buddhism—is one of the main issues dominating Indian politics as the Modi government has reached the mid-point of its mandate.²⁷

Political socialization

The range of attitudes mentioned above indicates the complex interaction taking place between tradition and modernity—a process that can be further investigated through specific questions: How do Indians acquire their political attitudes? How do the contenders for power communicate their positions on issues facing Indian society? How does the perception of authority and evaluation of political leaders vary across regions and sections of the population? Why have the electronic media achieved such prominence in India's electoral politics over the past years? The analysis that follows will illustrate the process of political socialization in the context of a traditional society undergoing rapid change.

Conventionally, in stable democracies, the individual is politically socialized through family, school, secondary association, and workplace. Totalitarian political systems usually inculcate the 'right' political attitudes by guiding the individual through school, youth groups, front organizations, and, for the privileged few, party membership. Neither model is completely applicable to India. Modernization has greatly diluted the effective role that family, caste, and kin once played in moulding attitudes. The totalitarian path is forbidden in theory by the Constitution, which guarantees the fundamental freedoms of thought, belief, faith, association, and movement, and in practice, by a functioning and occasionally fractious political process. That said, the coming of Hindu nationalist BJP to power at the centre and the attempt to induct Indian 'culture'—seen by the opponents of the party as a euphemism for *Hindutva*-Hindu values—into educational institutions and cultural bodies has set off protest movements.

Indian analysts started using public opinion surveys quite early, and this has made it possible to track changing opinions and attitudes that show a steady rise in political consciousness, a sense of empowerment and political information. Television—which is no longer a state monopoly—along with the internet, have accelerated the pace of the spread of political information in recent years.

Social change has influenced political socialization through means other than family, caste, or tribe. But as far as the conventional instruments of political socialization are concerned, the state in India has two main institutional constraints. Schools, in the absence of a national curriculum (primary education, under the federal division of powers, is a State subject) and in the absence of a tradition of civics education, are not an effective means of imparting or inculcating a common set of national values. Thus, it is not possible for the state to suggest a national policy. Even regional governments have prudently avoided the temptation of interfering with the contents and administration of schooling, though recent attempts by some regional governments to introduce a new ideological bias into school books created a nationwide protest from educationists. A similar attempt by the communist government of Kerala in 1959 led the President of India to dismiss the Kerala government on the grounds that lawful government of the State was not possible. This precedence has restrained the enthusiasm of newly elected governments in India from seeking to spread their ideas among the people by incorporating them into textbooks and school administration. As we learn from Rudolph and Rudolph (1982: 131–54), such attempts are ultimately self-defeating.²⁸

The foregoing suggests that educational institutions, for constitutional and political reasons, are not an effective institutional medium for the Indian state to promote a cohesive national political culture. But that is not the same as saying that schooling has no impact on promoting legitimacy and personal efficacy. Formal education is associated

with the legitimacy of the electoral process; the individual's sense of efficacy increases with education, as does confidence in politicians. However, there is a large body of illiterates whose evaluation of the personal accountability of individual politicians is at a lower level than the average, and a section of that group does not believe that elections are the only way to conduct politics. These are the sections of the population where leaders of mass movements are likely to find potential support.

In the past, mass illiteracy was the other main obstacle to state-sponsored political socialization through the print media. This has been overcome by the electronic media, which are restrained neither by the inability to read and write nor by the remoteness of villages from the capital, thanks to television sets, mobile phones and cheap internet access. Additionally, the introduction of competition into broadcasting has brought in diversity and sensitivity to consumer demands, and vastly enhanced the appeal of the electronic media. An innovation in this respect is internet sites that expose corruption in high quarters.²⁹

Until the onset of liberalization and penetration by the electronic media, the processes of political participation and electoral campaigns were the most effective tools of political socialization. New political attitudes and skills have evolved through participation. The pre-Independence legacies have also been enriched and sometimes replaced by developments since Independence. As a result, Indian society today is as affected by recent changes in its political and economic form as by its historical inheritance.

In the early years after 1947, the modernizing leaders around Nehru and the Congress leadership paid routine homage to a vaguely defined Indian nationalism, equal social democracy, economic self-reliance through import substitution, and secularism, understood as both the separation of state and religion, and equal respect for all religions. But, in sharp contrast to other new states, these broad and abstract ideas were not made into a dogma. The Congress Party itself harboured many factions that differed widely from one another in personal loyalties as well as ideological leanings.

As a result, in each of these major initiatives undertaken by the state, a significant variation of normative theory was used. The socialist aspirations of Nehru and the myth of the independent peasant producer were intertwined in the policies of land reforms. The neo-Gandhian approach, embodied in *Panchayati Raj* and community development, was juxtaposed with an equally powerful belief in the rational individual as the basis of voting decisions. Much reliance was placed on the ability of such individuals to identify parties as well as candidates because of their knowledge about the relationship of issues to voting choices. The market, as the driving force behind production, consumption, credit, and communication, was promoted with as much vigour as central planning and bureaucratic implementation, and both aimed at achieving the same objective. These ideas, whether indigenous to India or gleaned from elsewhere, were formulated at the apex of the system and were expected to trickle down to the regional and local arenas.

Efficacy and legitimacy in India

Thanks to the availability of good and reliable public opinion data, we are able to observe the sense of efficacy within different subsections of the Indian population.³⁰ In response to the question 'Do you think your vote has an effect?' one can notice the steady rise of the sense of efficacy in the population going up from 48.5 percent of the entire population in 1971 to 59.5 percent in 2009 (see Table 3.2). Interestingly, the gain in efficacy has come from the steady decline in those who either do not have an opinion or are not able

Table 3.2 Efficacy of vote (in percent)

Question: 'Do you think your vote has effect on how things are run in this country, or think your vote makes no difference?'

	1971	1996	1999	2004	2009
Has effect	48.5	58.6	63	67.5	59.5
Makes no difference	16.2	21.3	17.4	17.5	17.1
Don't know	35.3	19.1	19.6	15	23.3
<i>Vote has effect</i>		<i>1996</i>		<i>2004</i>	
Illiterate		47		54.9	
Scheduled tribe		47.8		58.4	
Very poor		50.4		59.2	
Female		50.8		61.3	
Aged 56 years or above		51.9		62.6	
Rural		56.9		66.2	
OBC		58		67.8	
Hindu		58		67.7	
Muslim		60.3		66.6	
Aged 25 years or less		60.8		68.1	
Upper caste		61.5		70.9	
Upper socio-economic class		62.1		78.7	
Urban		64.1		72.3	
Male		66.2		73	
Christian		66.4		69.6	
College and above		79.6		82.4	

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1971, 1996, 1999, 2004, 2009.

to take a position on the question. The percentage of those who do not feel efficacious appears to have stayed low (less than one-fifth of the population) but stable over almost three decades between 1971 and 2004. The further details we get when one goes down to sub-categories are very interesting. Thus, in 1996 as well as in 2004, those with a higher level of efficacy tended to be male, upper class, upper caste, and highly educated. However, SCs, Muslims, and Christians also appear on the higher levels of efficacy. This, as we shall see later in the book, is the consequence of political mobilization, driven by ambitious leaders working out of special interest constituencies within the electorate.

A pattern like efficacy can be noticed in the case of legitimacy. Here the question has been posed in the negative, to make sure that those who consider the existing political system, based on parties, elections and assemblies, preferable to one without these attributes of parliamentary democracy, will answer the question in the negative; not an easy thing to do for interviewees facing college-educated young men and women, carrying clipboards, and ceremoniously writing the answers down. Impressively, the percentage of those who see the political system as legitimate has gone up from 43.4 percent in 1971 to 56.4 percent in 2009 (Table 3.3). As in the case of efficacy, here also the gain has been made by a decline in those without an opinion or the undecided. A small percentage of the population, hovering around one-tenth of the total, remains convinced that alternatives to parliamentary democracy might be better. Further analysis shows that the highly educated, upper castes and Christians, urban, male, and younger sections of the population are on the higher levels of legitimacy.

Table 3.3 Legitimacy (in percent)

Question: Suppose there were no parties or assemblies, and elections were not held; do you think that the government in this country can be run better?

	1971	1996	2004	2009
Yes	14.2	11.4	9	13.1
No	43.4	68.8	72.2	56.4
Can't say or don't know	42.4	19.8	18.8	30.5
<i>Not better government without parties</i>		<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	
Very poor		61.5	65.9	
Illiterate		61.6	61.1	
Sikh		62.7	66.2	
56 years or above		63.2	68.4	
Female		64.0	67.1	
OBC		65.4	72.1	
Scheduled tribe		66.3	68.0	
Scheduled caste		67.3	69.0	
Urban		68.1	79.6	
Hindu		68.2	72.6	
<i>All India</i>		68.8	72.2	
Rural		69.0	70.3	
25 years or less		71.3	73.2	
Upper class		71.6	81.8	
Muslim		72.1	72.9	
Male		73.4	76.8	
Christian		73.4	72.8	
Upper caste		73.9	75.5	
College and above		74.1	85.0	

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1971, 1996, 1999, 2004.

Despite the generally positive endorsement of citizen efficacy, however, the number of those who say that their vote has effect seems to have declined slightly (Table 3.2). From this, one might get the feeling of the robust and linear growth of positive endorsement fraying at the edges, but this may be a passing phase and not a clear refutation of the trend, for the negative rating has remained, as before, at 17 percent, and those who might have recently changed their minds have most likely migrated to 'don't know', whose percentage has swollen from 15 to 23 percent.

Finally, the fact of an increase in personal efficacy and institutional legitimacy might still underpin rising group consciousness, and in the case of contentious issues such as the idea of having a single personal law for the entire Indian population, the sense of personal efficacy might enhance fragmentation of the national community. The question asked here is about having a separate personal law for each religious community rather than having one universal civil code for everyone living within Indian territory, regardless of religion. The results reported in Table 3.4 show a steady rise in those who do not see a problem with each community having its own civil code, their numbers having grown from 44.4 percent in 1996 to 53.8 percent in 2004. Here too, the percentage of those who 'don't know' has diminished, thus emphasizing the growing political consciousness of the people. Those opposed to this form of multi-culturalism—though the

Table 3.4 Need for separate civil code for every community by party support (in percent)

	1996						2004					
	INC	BJP+	NF	LF	BSP	Total	UPA	NDA	LF	BSP	SP	Total
Disagree	29.9	36.5	29.4	22.1	30.4	30.4	27.4	29.7	22.4	20.2	22.3	27.1
Don't know	23.8	22.9	28.5	18.2	24.8	25.1	19.0	17.4	15.0	26.3	23.5	19.2
Agree	46.3	40.6	42.2	59.6	44.7	44.4	53.6	52.9	62.6	53.5	54.2	53.8
<i>Support for separate civil code</i>												
Hindu			41.5							52.1		
All India			44.4							53.8		
Christian			50.2							61.2		
Sikh			51.6							48.5		
Muslim			67.1							66.0		

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1996, 2004; Mitra and Singh (2009), p. 117.

numbers are still small—argue in favour of cultural nationalism, which demands a close liaison between the cultural basis of the community and the structure of law and order. The sections in the lower part of Table 3.4 provide a glimpse into the hiatus between the advocates of different religions. Muslim opinion is most in favour of separate laws for different communities, going up to 67 percent in 1996 and 77 percent in 2004, while Hindu opinion has gone up to 52.1 percent. An even more interesting statistic is the support for separate civil codes among supporters of the Hindu nationalist BJP; impressive at 40.6 percent in 1996 and 52.9 percent in 2004 in the NDA, dominated by the BJP.

Conclusion

In the span of the past decades since Independence, Indian society has changed radically. Status as the basis of social exclusion and political dominance has gradually lost legitimacy. Indian society has steadily moved in the direction of equality before the law, equality of status and the legitimacy of difference, as befits a political culture based on plurality, tolerance and egalitarianism. Still, the violent inter-community riots, vicious caste conflicts, gender violence and incidents of intolerance remind us of the residual vestiges of an oppressive social system.

Survey data and reports in the media provide some insights into this crucial aspect of India's political system and process that have brought about this change which, in Europe, during the long historical process of rapid social change, was accomplished through tremendous violence. The presence of a pro-active judiciary, a democratic state constitutionally committed to a liberal social agenda, acting as an intermediary between conflicting social groups, vote-hungry politicians setting themselves up as spokespersons for underprivileged groups, and watchful civil society have helped make incremental and largely peaceful transition possible.

The chapter had mentioned Dumont's foundational concept of 'home hierarchicus'³¹ at the outset as a baseline of analysis. The evolution of Indian society in terms of attitudes to authority, social status, sense of efficacy and trust help us take a fresh look at the

caste system and its transformation. These categories, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, are derived largely from the scholarly contributions of Louis Dumont. He had suggested that the study of the caste system was indispensable for the knowledge of India. He focused on the need to understand the ideology of caste as reflected in the classical texts, historical examples etc. He advocated the use of an Indological and structural approach to the study of the caste system and village social system in India.³² From this perspective, Dumont himself, in his *Homo Hierarchicus*, had built up a model of Indian civilization, based on a non-competitive ritual hierarchical system. Dumont's analysis of caste system was based on the classical literature and historical examples. New findings from survey research, some of which have been reported in this chapter, question the kind of static, essentialist, hierarchic view of Indian society.

The findings reported here testify to the spread of egalitarian values in a society where the vestiges of social hierarchy persist. The contentious process of competitive politics has spread to each nook and cranny of Indian society. The result is the growing sense of efficacy and, consequently, legitimacy of modern political institutions introduced by the Constitution. Constitutional norms have, themselves, undergone change and critical reform of social and economic institutions, as we have seen in the social legislation has brought about a gradual revolution of Indian society. Some analysts see this fact as the indispensable basis for Indian democracy, responsible for the non-emergence of class or community as a polarizing political cleavage. Unlike China or Vietnam, where peasant mobilization on the issue of class facilitated the rise of a political revolution led by the Communist Party, or Sri Lanka, where the emergence of ethnic identity polarized society into warring camps of Tamils and Sinhalese, Indian society has segmented and coalesced in a manner which provides a constituency for every possible opinion while making it possible, nevertheless, for liberal democracy to function, thanks to the logic of coalition politics. The chapter that follows builds on the spectrum of cross-cutting cleavages that characterize Indian society today and examines how, and with what success, Indian institutions have sought to weave the fragments into a coherent state, a political community, and an emerging nation.

Notes

- 1 As the epigraphs to this chapter indicate, though Gandhi put the welfare of the lowest strata of Indian society at the forefront of his political agenda, he did not repudiate the caste system in categorical terms, drawing vigorous criticism from Ambedkar and leaving a trail of ambiguity about his position on radical social change. Despite his attempts to give dignity to social groups excluded from the upper strata through his innovative concept of Harijan—literally, the children of God—as one can see from the epigraph, Gandhi has been taken to task by Ambedkar, the celebrated leader of untouchables at the time of India's Independence, for his refusal to categorically repudiate caste. The oppressive character of the caste system, particularly, the practice of untouchability in everyday life, has found evocative analysis in the writings of Freeman (1979).
- 2 In his widely influential work *Homo Hierarchicus* (in French, 1966; in English, 1970), the French Indologist Louis Dumont had depicted the caste system as a token of the cultural unity and distinctiveness of India. While his intellectual contribution to the scholarly study of the caste system generated great interest in what he depicted as a quintessentially Indian institution, it emphasised the otherness of India, and foreclosed the scope for mutations of the rigid social hierarchy germane to the caste system under the impact of competitive elections based on individual franchise, and social and economic reform which generated new political space for individual agency. The hybrid forms that issued from the conflict and conflation of two different set of values represented, respectively by the caste system and

- the empowerment, entitlement and enfranchisement of the individual, guaranteed by the Constitution of India, will be taken up for detailed analysis later in this chapter.
- 3 See Box 3.1 for a list of key social legislation, aimed at providing legislative and executive muscles to the process of reform, aimed at social transformation.
 - 4 This theme has been dealt with at great length and depth in *The Rise of the Plebians? The Changing Face of the Indian Legislative Assemblies*, Edited by Christophe Jaffrelot and Sanjay Kumar (Delhi, India: Routledge, 2009).
 - 5 See Dumont (1970) and Freeman (1979).
 - 6 Surinder Jodhka challenges the concept of homo-hierarchicus based entirely on status. He argues that caste is about material power rather than status. See Jodhka, Surinder S, *Caste: Oxford India short introductions*, 2012, 1st ed.
 - 7 See Naipaul (1990), p. 517.
 - 8 Gandhi's vision, as one can see in Ambedkar's comments cited in the first epigraph to this chapter, had limited acceptance from Muslims, untouchables and some sections of Hindus.
 - 9 The National Food Security Act, 2013 (also Right to Food Act) is an Act of the Parliament of India. It aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. It converts into legal entitlements existing food security programmes of the Government of India. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services scheme and the Public Distribution System. The Midday Meal Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme are universal in nature whereas the PDS will reach about two-thirds of the population (75 percent in rural areas and 50 percent in urban areas). Under the provisions of the bill, beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System are entitled to 5 kg per person per month of cereals.
 - 10 In his case study of the 'breast-cloth controversy', Hardgrave (1968) gives a brilliant demonstration of how the norm of legal equality, backed up by the might of British rule, cut into the rigid hierarchy that had relegated the untouchable caste of Shanans to the status of degraded pariahs, whose women were not allowed to cover their breasts in public. With growing prosperity from toddy-tapping, and with the support of missionaries, the Shanans could successfully resist the attempt of the local upper castes to enforce this taboo, and eventually got themselves registered in the census as Nadars.
 - 11 'Caste was the "transmission belt" between the speculative ideas of the intellectual elite, and the mundane orientation of religious observance among the people at large' (Bendix 1962, p. 196). By its traditionalism, the caste system retards economic development, and conversely, inter-caste barriers become attenuated wherever economic activities attain an increased momentum. Thus, 'the spirit of the caste system militated against an indigenous development of capitalism' (emphasis added, *ibid.*).
 - 12 Beals (1963), p. 41.
 - 13 Caste consciousness transforms caste from an ascriptive status to a politically convenient self-classification. For a discussion of the efforts to improve the material conditions of the former untouchables through the policy of reservation and the upper caste backlash against it, see Mitra (1987), pp. 292–312.
 - 14 Ms. Mayawati, leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), a former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh is a major force to reckon with in regional as well as national politics. The same goes for Akhilesh Yadav, leader of the Samajwadi Party, who, along with his father Mulayam Singh Yadav, represents the political significance of the backward classes, of whom, the Yadav caste is a main component.
 - 15 Findings from opinion and attitude surveys reinforce the impression that opinions on the issue of Ayodhya are polarized. Asked if 'only the Ram temple should be built on the spot where the mosque stood', 68 percent of Muslims disagree compared to only 20 percent of Hindus. However, support among Hindus for the proposition that 'India should make greater efforts for friendly relations with Pakistan' remains around 40 percent, although support among Muslims has slightly decreased from the earlier 72 percent to 65 percent. Judging from the findings of opinion polls, while India's political process continues to reinforce group consciousness, thus creating a political distance between different communities, it also generates a sense of personal efficacy which leads to the emergence of new, short-term alliances among opposing groups. We shall come back to this theme later in this chapter. National Election Study (NES), 1999, CSDS Delhi.

- 16 Caste consciousness transforms caste from a primordial category to a politically convenient self-classification. For a discussion of the efforts to improve the material conditions of the former untouchables through the policy of reservation and the upper caste backlash against it, see Mitra (1987), pp. 292–312.
- 17 See Sontheimer and Kulke (1989).
- 18 See D.E. Smith (1963). *India as a Secular State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- 19 ‘There is a good chance that 20 years from now, many of India’s constitutional anomalies regarding the secular state will have disappeared. It is reasonable to expect that by that time there will be a uniform civil code and that Hindu and Muslim law, as such, will have ceased to exist. Legislation having already dealt with the most serious abuses in Hindu religion there will be little need for further interference by the state’ (Smith 1963, p. 134).
- 20 For a discussion of the dilemma of Hindu nationalism regarding the core secular values of the Indian state, see Subrata Mitra, “The Ambivalent Moderation of Hindu Nationalism in India”, in *Australian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 48, No. 3 (2013), 269–285.
- 21 This took place in the Gujarat town of Godhra where about sixty Hindu men, women and children, returning from Ayodhya were burned to death inside a train compartment that was sabotaged. This provoked extensive Hindu-Muslim riots.
- 22 See Agarwal, “Gender and land Rights”, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 3(1–2), 2003 which shows how the Hindu succession Act is better implemented in the Southern States.
- 23 This theme has been developed further in Jyotirindra Dasgupta, ‘India: democratic becoming and; combined development’, in Diamond et al. (1989), p. 62.
- 24 Morris-Jones (1987), p. 61. The statement, first made in 1962, turned out to be prophetic, because J.P. Narayan became a rallying point for opposition to the Emergency in 1975.
- 25 The resurgence of the Congress as a national party in the parliamentary election in 2009 holds an important pointer towards a re-alignment of forces. See Chapter 6.
- 26 The Indian press reported that the Left Front government at the height of its power in West Bengal was busy sending ‘high-profile delegations to woo foreign investment and attract European investment in agriculture’, while the draft resolution for the next party conference ‘deprecates the trend towards liberalization which has resulted in a bonanza for foreign capital and Indian big business’ (Manas Ghosh, ‘Lack of identity: options before the CPI(M)’, *The Statesman Weekly*, 22 April, 1995, p. 11). However, the recent conflict over the attempt of the communist government of West Bengal to set up a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) shows how arduous the task of repositioning a party can be.
- 27 For a discussion of this debate, see Subrata Mitra, “Encapsulation without Integration? Electoral Democracy and the Ambivalent Moderation of Hindu Nationalism in India”, *Studies in Indian Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2016), 1–12.
- 28 Rudolph and Rudolph (1982), pp. 131–54.
- 29 In March 2001, the Internet News Agency ‘Tehelka’ uncovered a bribery scandal among leading government officials which caused the resignation of Defence Minister George Fernandes, BJP Party President Bangaru Laxman and the President of the Samata Party, Jaya Jaitly.
- 30 The data, collected from face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of the Indian adult population by trained interviewers, have been graciously made available by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. For details about the method of sampling and fieldwork, see Mitra and Singh (2009).
- 31 Louis Dumont was primarily concerned with the ideology of the caste system. His understanding of caste lays emphasis on attributes of caste that is why, he is put in the category of those following the attributional approach to the caste system. For him, caste is a set of relationships of economic, political and kinship systems, sustained by certain ‘values’, which are mostly religious in nature. Dumont identifies ‘hierarchy’ as the essential value underlying the caste system, supported by Hinduism. Indian civilization, to him, is a specific ideology whose components are in a binary opposition to that of West: modern against traditional, holism against individualism, hierarchy against equality, purity against pollution, status against power etc. This opposition (dialectic) is basis for comparison at the level of global ideology within the specific ideology of the caste system. The opposite is between the principles of purity and pollution. Apart from ideology and structure, the notion of hierarchy has a pivotal place in Dumont’s study of the caste system. Hierarchy implies opposition between

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- pure and impure, which also determines its dialectics. Hierarchy also suggests the relationship of ‘encompassing’ and being ‘encompassed’. In the caste system, the principle of purity encompasses the impure.
- 32 He viewed ‘Indian sociology’ as that specialized branch which stood at the confluence of Indology and sociology. He advocated this as the right type of ‘mix’, prerequisite to the understanding of Indian society.

4 Strength with democracy

Separation and division of powers, and the imperative of leadership

Rulership can be successfully carried out only with the help of associates. One wheel does not turn alone. Therefore he [the ruler] should appoint ministers and listen to their opinions.

Kautilya, *Arthashastra* I, 7, 9 (3rd century, BC)

It is by this mixture of monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical powers, blended together in one system, and by these three estates balancing one another, that our free constitution of government hath been preserved so long inviolate.

Bolingbroke, *A Dissertation upon Parties* (1733–34),
cited in Sabine (1975), p. 515

... they [India's Prime Ministers] have often ... achieved a kind of transcendence ... to provide moral leadership to the country, which is rather surprising for leaders who are partisan figures.

Manor (1994), p. 13

Introduction

Modern institutions, grafted onto traditional societies as part of the modernisation package, are often the first casualty of the process of rapid social mobilisation and rising expectations that overtake the capacity of the state to fulfil these aspirations. As we learn from Huntington (1968), most societies emerging from colonial rule with an impoverished population fail to sustain modern institutions because the gap between popular aspirations and institutional capacities grows, leading to an onslaught on the institutions of the state by radical, discontented people.¹ India is a case in contrast. The country's successful transition from colonial rule to a multiparty democracy has taken place within the institutional arrangement set up by the Constitution, promulgated in 1950, and still, continuously, in force. This is an exceptional achievement by the standards of transitional societies. We discuss in this chapter how the main components of the Indian political system have coped with the transition from colonial rule in terms of their structure, functions and institutional entanglement with the broader contours of Indian politics.²

Successful institutionalisation of politics entails (1) the creation of rules, and, organisations that adapt effectively to changing political environments, (2) the establishment of institutions that have complex internal structures corresponding to the multiple functions they must discharge, and (3) institutions that remain autonomous of the actual

holders of power and (4) are coherent in terms of unity of purpose among the main stakeholders. Institutionalisation is thus one of the major challenges that changing societies face in their efforts to achieve political stability and consolidation of the new institutional arrangement.³

Following Independence, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the government of India undertook an ambitious programme of modernisation, based on strategic social and economic reform. Projects similar in their ambitious targets in the USSR and China had relied on a cadre-based ruling party with a cellular structure penetrating deep into society and all arenas of power, to implement the agenda of revolutionary transformation. In contrast, India at Independence was a post-colonial society with the Indian National Congress—a mass party led by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru—who were deeply steeped in the ethos of liberal democracy. Instead of violent coercion by zealous cadres, elected politicians who swore by the democratic Constitution were expected to undertake the burden of nation-building, with the help of modern political institutions.

The institutional arrangement, designed by the Constitution of India, has helped adapt the agenda of modernization, derived from Western liberal democracies, to Indian conditions. The consequences of this process of interpenetration of modern institutions and the traditional society became the main institutional basis of social mobilisation in India. The process led to the legitimization of the norms of modernity, secularism, individual rights and independence of the judiciary, and the political recruitment of new subaltern groups who eventually joined the ranks of new social elites. How this happened and why these institutions survived the passing away of the ‘Independence generation’ are part of the exciting story of transition to democracy and its consolidation.

The chapter delves into these issues through a dissection of how the new state and its institutions succeeded in establishing themselves as the legitimate political centre of India’s diverse society. The analysis picks up the thread of elite agency in the introductory chapter to show how a responsive and democratic leadership generated coherent and effective institutions. This was achieved despite the fragmentation of authority and managed to mould castes, tribes, religious orders and regional kin networks into a coherent national political community.

Modern political institutions and traditional society

India’s success in making the transition from colonial rule to democratic governance has considerably benefited from the unintended consequences of the peculiar nature of British colonial rule. We have already seen how a small, cohesive elite, accountable to the British Parliament, exercising power based on norms like the rule of law, ruled India with the help of Indian collaborators, and a colonial administrative machinery. Pyramidal in structure, British colonial administration took the shape of vast numbers of Indians under the command of elite bodies such as the Indian Civil Service, Indian Police and similar bodies. Their power lay as much in force, as in consent, obtained through respect for local custom and accommodation of dissent and diversity. The slow but steady induction of Indians into the administration led to the growth of a native elite well versed in the rules of parliamentary democracy. The critical decade of 1937–47 during which power was shared by elected leaders and colonial civil servants, imparted a valuable experience of governance to Indian leaders. This historical contingency made it possible for them to play a key role in formulating the Constitution, forming the

government and undertaking strategic reform, following the Transfer of Power. These ‘Fathers of the Constitution’ imparted their own political experiences and intelligence into the institutions of India. The unfolding of this institutional arrangement led to the development of countervailing forces which, in turn, secured the democratic ethos of the Constitution.

The intricate scheme of the separation and division of powers, the watchdog function of the judiciary and the parliament, independent commissions and committees, the bridging function of the Prime Minister (Figure 4.1) and the bureaucracy, played crucial roles in the process of transition. India maintained the British practice of a head of state in the office of the President who, in normal times, like the British crown, ‘reigns but does not rule’. Actual power rested in the hands of the Prime Minister. However, the fact that both offices are elective opens the scope for competition and conflict. How India has so far managed to avoid this potential pitfall while in neighbouring Pakistan, this has been a constant source of stress, is a theme that would be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

India emerged from colonial rule with a group of statesmen led by Jawaharlal Nehru. They united on a modern, secular, socialist agenda of nation-building, and were distinguished politicians and capable administrators. Nevertheless, they were all loyal to the Congress Party. Quite unusually for the emerging post-colonial states of their time, they shared a plural vision of the relationship between state and society. The Indian agenda and the line-up of these leading personalities responsible for its implementation were different from the totalitarian vision and authoritarian leadership of China and, in many

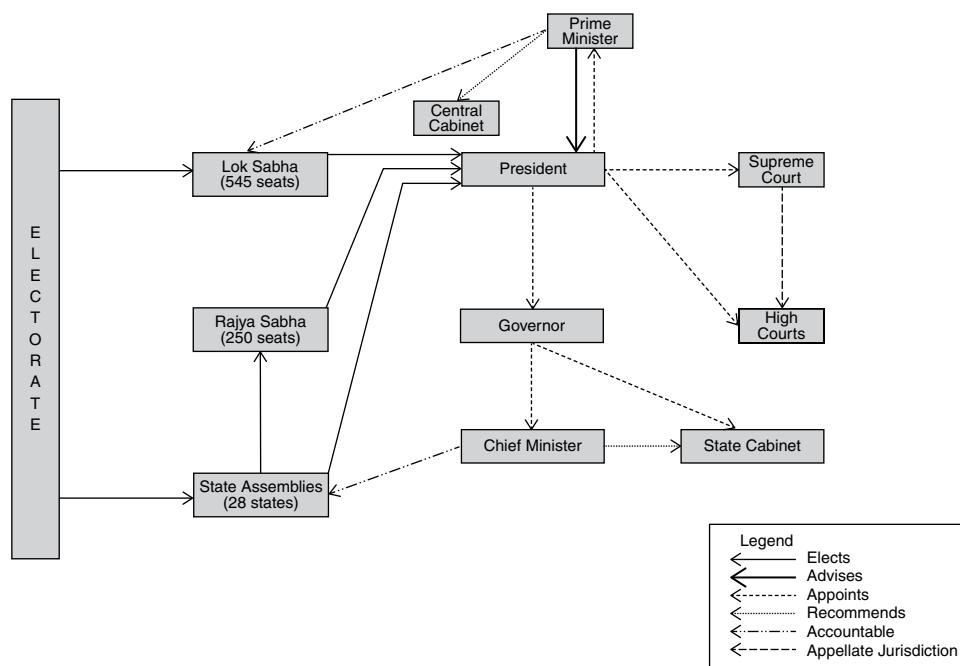


Figure 4.1 India's institutional arrangement.

Source: Author's own.

ways, the authoritarian leadership of Pakistan's Muslim League which came to power after Independence. India's leaders sought to accommodate elements of traditional society within the framework of modern institutions. However, when specific individuals strayed too far off what the democratic and secular ethos required, the central leadership of the Congress Party—deferentially referred to as the 'High Command'—pulled these rebels back into the mainstream of the party and government. This method of reconciling regional and local autonomy within the framework of a modern state trying to assert its authority has been referred to as 'rule by consensus', and 'accommodation'.⁴

As one can only expect, from the outset, the political system faced a hiatus between authority vested in the modern institutions of the state and social power of castes, kin groups, tribes and religious formations which were primordial in character and had little knowledge or patience with the niceties of democracy.⁵ The problem, staple of the scholarship on transitional societies,⁶ was by no means peculiar to India. The relatively sudden withdrawal of the British colonial state, which had kept a segmented society and several hundred princely states firmly together, led to the chaos and large-scale violence that marked the Partition of the country. This has been summed up by Granville Austin (1966) in his classic study of the making of the Indian Constitution, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* which sums up the problem as one of balancing the authority and legitimacy of the modern state with the power of traditional society to which it was held accountable by the Constitution.

Austin refers to this 'balancing' in terms of reconciling strength with democracy. Typically, the former requires the concentration of authority and the latter, its dispersion. The English polity has developed this delicate balance over the course of centuries since the signing of the 'Magna Carta' in the year 1215 when a few aristocrats made King John concede to the principle of limitations on executive authority. India, where the traditional society was held under the tutelage of the colonial state with its attendant asymmetric power relations, for close to two centuries prior to Independence, has followed a different trajectory.

The state and the tradition of accountability are based on modern theorists of the social contract such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Bolingbroke and Montesquieu. As we see in the epigraphs to this chapter, the concept of social contract existed in a rudimentary fashion in the classical model of kingship in India. As we see in the epigraph to this chapter from Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the tradition of the separation of secular and ecclesiastical authority formed a solid basis on which Indian traditions of authority were built.⁷ Fortunately, but also by design, India has found her own solution to the problem of separation and division of powers on the one hand, and political cohesion and accountability on the other, in the office of the Prime Minister. By combining authority and accountability (see Figure 4.1) this office gives a central focus to the constitutional arrangement.

The adoption of British parliamentary democracy as the model of India's governance at Independence in 1947 was, in a way, a natural consequence of the application of a series of legislative instruments with the British stamp on them, starting with the Council Act of 1830 (Chapter 2). The successive generation of Indian leaders, who acted as intermediaries between the British and the Indian population—their role alternating between collaboration and contestation—were already familiar with the British statutes and the bargaining that characterized the political process. The real change, for many of them, came in terms of the vast number of jobs and governmental patronage that became available for party-building, networking and the creation of enormous personal fortunes—after Independence.

In the event, the form of government that was introduced in 1947 included the main features of the British system, namely the accountability of the executive to the legislature, a professional and politically neutral military and career civil service, and the rule of law, all operating within the framework of a parliamentary system. Some salient features of the political system of the United States such as federalism, the separation of powers, and fundamental rights of individuals protected by a Supreme Court were also introduced. These constitutional and legislative measures reflected the visions of Prime Minister Nehru and Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, as well as the leaders of the underprivileged—most notably B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution—who wanted to give concrete shape to a broad vision of a modern, secular, democratic India, mobilizing its resources towards the twin objectives of growth and redistribution.

India in 1947, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, started with several comparative advantages by the standards of most post-colonial states these eventually facilitated the growth of a parliamentary democracy. The transition from colonial rule through a peaceful Transfer of Power compared to a violent revolution provided a continuity in both the political leadership, civil service and army, and the institutional structure of the state. Though most English civil servants and military officers left at Independence, the bureaucracy and security apparatus, both already staffed with a large contingent of well-trained Indians, were available to mentor a smooth transition from the colonial regime to democratic rule. Above all, the development of the Congress Party organization into a nationwide electoral organization made for a unified backdrop to the exercise of power at the centre, in regions and localities as well as the new civil society organisations. The Partition of British India that accompanied Independence, and the Transfer of power to the two dominions of India and Pakistan, by removing the Muslim League which had been the main challenger to the Congress Party in the political arena, produced a smaller state but a more cohesive political system. The leaders of the successor state quickly adapted themselves to the new, competitive political environment, based not so much on nationalist ideals, as on the pragmatic politics of patronage and public policy. This led to the creation of a political system that institutionalized representation, competition, and accountability.

Finally, Nehru's adoption of non-alignment as the cornerstone of India's foreign policy created a conceptual symmetry between India's domestic and international politics. Both strategies aimed at the accommodation of conflicting interests—the Western Bloc and the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies at the height of the Cold War—and the conflicting interests of class, region, language, ethnic group and ideologies in India's domestic politics. The 'Panchsheel'⁸ stance put a distance between the global conflicts of that time and India's domestic political arena. The result was the rise to prominence of a generation of inward-looking political leadership that saw elections and the growth of a self-reliant economy as the main goal of the Indian state and the main basis for the legitimacy of their power. This basic institutional structure has survived the challenges of the past six decades⁹, a period that includes the demise of the generation of leaders who were in charge at the time of Independence. The political system has also been able to withstand the challenge arising from the newly mobilized social groups, Left- and Right-wing radicalism, famine, mass poverty and large-scale changes in the economy, a major border war against China in 1962, and three wars against Pakistan.

British colonial rule, while deeply exploitative nevertheless had a positive consequence for post-colonial democracy. One legacy of the Indian resistance to British rule was a

Table 4.1 The separation and division of powers in India

<i>Levels of Government</i>	<i>Powers</i>		
	<i>Executive</i>	<i>Legislative</i>	<i>Judicial</i>
National	President-in-Council	Parliament	Supreme Court
Regional	Governor-in-Council	Assembly	High Court
Local	District Magistrate	<i>Zilla Parishad</i>	District Court

Source: Author's own.

deep distrust of power and a determination to secure the maximum possible freedom for its citizens. The members of the Constituent Assembly gave shape to these aspirations in the institutions they designed. In some cases, they drew upon India's cultural and political legacies, but in others they borrowed widely from the major constitutions of the Western world. The result was the separation of power among the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, at the national level. This is represented by the President and the Council of Ministers, Parliament, and the Supreme Court respectively, to complete the system of countervailing powers; an equally robust division of power between the federal government and the regions was also established (see Table 4.1).

The functional separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers—respectively, to tax and administer, to legislate, and to ensure that public life follows the rule of law—and their union in the person of the Crown is a quintessentially English idea. India's political leaders had made their first acquaintance with this functional separation of powers, as far back as the 1830, with the Council Act. The Constituent Assembly adapted this concept to the Indian context, but with an important modification. Significant amounts of executive and legislative power were set aside for the region, under a federal division of areas of competence. In its enthusiasm for the decentralization of power, the Constituent Assembly did not stop there. Despite misgivings about localism being an obstacle to social transformation and progress, by leaders with the stature of Ambedkar, the Constituent Assembly nevertheless expressed strong hopes for the devolution of power, below the level of the regional governments, to be exercised directly by representatives of the people.

This hope took concrete shape in 1957 when the Balwantrai Mehta Committee recommended the creation of a *Panchayati Raj*, to set up representative bodies at the district, sub-district and village levels. Endowed with a measure of administrative autonomy, they were charged with developmental functions and allocated adequate financial means to put these ideas into practice. The implementation of *Panchayati Raj* has been far from uniform, but thanks to the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution in 1993, all of India's half a million villages are covered by some form of direct exercise of power by the residents. An additional feature of this amendment was to provide for women's participation in the exercise of power by instituting a quota of at least one-third of the seats to be occupied by women. This has brought millions of women into elected offices at the local level—and set the process rolling—for greater participation of women in higher levels of power.

Thanks to the division and separation of power, the resultant structure had tremendous potential for political fragmentation and social conflict. However, India's 'state-dominated pluralism'¹⁰—a political system where a powerful state functions as an honest broker among a multiplicity of social groups—provided the right balance

between central direction and respect for regional and local autonomy. There are two further constitutional mechanisms to generate a dynamic balance between integration of a diverse population, emerging from centuries of colonial or princely rule into a national structure and identity, and differentiation along regional and local loyalties.

To cope with extraordinary situations where rapid action to defend orderly rule and national integrity was imperative, the Constitution gave a series of ‘Emergency powers’ to the national executive to meet the challenge of grave political crises, making it possible for the central authority to step in, to protect the territorial integrity of the state, maintain lawful governance, particularly in the regions, and a third, not yet tested provision, to maintain the financial viability of the state as a whole. These powers are meant to be exercised formally by the President, but in practice, guided by the recommendations of the Prime Minister. Similarly, although the Constitution formally vested authority in the President, everyday exercise of executive power and legislative initiative was intended to be in the hands of the Prime Minister, whose accountability to the Parliament acts as a bridge function between bodies responsible for law-making and the executive.

Similarly, the office of the Governor—formal head of the regional government, appointed by the President at the recommendation of the Prime Minister—constitutes a crucial link between the central government and the States. It is the report of the Governor to the President on the state of law and order in the State that forms the crucial basis for the declaration of a state of Emergency under Article 356. This intricate institutional arrangement with large elements taken from British practices, to which a good measure of inspired borrowing from other traditions and a significant amount of indigenous innovation have been added, is explained in detail in Figure 4.1.

The Executive

The role of the President as the head of state was designed with the British monarch in mind¹¹, but in practice, the office combines the ceremonial roles of head of state with some substantive powers. Under the Indian Constitution, executive power is formally vested in the President, and he is expected to exercise these powers on the advice of the Council of Ministers, with the Prime Minister at its head. The real lines of control, as shown in Figure 4.1, nevertheless indicate otherwise.

The President appoints the Prime Minister and has the authority to dismiss him. But, unlike in neighbouring Pakistan, no Prime Minister in India has ever been dismissed by a President. By convention, the powers of the President are severely limited. The President invites the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Lok Sabha—the lower house of the Parliament—to form the government. The President exercises his authority as advised by the Prime Minister. But that does not mean that the Indian President is merely a ‘rubber stamp’. The office has evolved enormously since the early years of the Republic when the office attracted people like Rajendra Prasad, who had deliberately renounced an active role in politics, philosophers like Radhakrishnan and educationists like Zakir Hussain who brought decorum to the office but not active intervention. The more recent Presidents have emerged from active and engaging political careers which have continued, albeit from under the façade of the presidency, adding much-needed balance to the complex politics of a federal republic.

The President might identify a potential leader when there is no clear parliamentary majority, both at the level of the Union government as well as in the States. This was the case in 1989 with V.P. Singh, who was invited to form the government when

Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party, which had the largest number of seats in the Lok Sabha, stated that he did not intend to form the Cabinet. More recently, after the parliamentary elections of 2009, the President invited Manmohan Singh to form the government again. Since 1989, Presidents have been extraordinarily watchful in upholding constitutional norms and preventing the use of governmental powers for partisan purposes. This has greatly contributed to the growth in the stature of the Presidency. Unlike Pakistan or the fifth French Republic, this growth has not taken place at the expense of the norms of parliamentary democracy.

Though the Indian Constitution successfully replicated the British method of the separation of the executive from the legislature and their union in the office of the Prime Minister, there was an important detail that was missing. In Britain, the Queen reigns and the Prime Minister rules; but India does not have a hereditary ruler who would combine the dignity of high office with its entirely ceremonial character. Unlike the British head of state, the Indian President needs to be elected, but in a manner where the fact of election will not undercut the power and legitimacy of the Prime Minister. The election procedure involves the political representation and active participation of all regions of the country as well as the national and regional political parties.¹² The President is elected by an electoral college consisting of the members of the Parliament and elected members of State assemblies, through proportional representation by the ‘single transferable votes system’. This is a complex electoral procedure that has been explicitly designed to ensure proportionality among the States as well as parity between the regions and the nation. The President’s five-year term can be renewed and though no President of India to date has had to undergo it, the President can be removed through impeachment, by Parliament. This complex procedure requires a two-thirds majority in both Houses of the Parliament—numbers that are extremely difficult for any party or coalition to muster. In consequence, the office of the President has acquired a certain immunity from everyday politics and stability. This, in turn, allows the President the requisite room to manoeuvre to act as the ‘conscience of the nation’ and provide a final court of recourse to those who feel unjustly treated by the powers that be.

The harmonization of the personalities and political ambitions of the President and the Prime Minister and the coordination of their roles have been crucial to the successful functioning of the Indian political system. Quite fortuitously for India, Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic, closely cooperated with Nehru as Prime Minister, which set the precedent for subsequent occupants of the office. Both—Nehru as the head of the interim government and Prasad as the chairman of the Constituent Assembly—had considerable administrative experience prior to assuming office. Their long association with the Congress Party had acquainted them with the culture of consensus and accommodation that were the characteristics of the party most of the time. Temperamentally, Nehru, the modernist, charismatic leader, hugely popular with the masses, seamlessly moved into the driving seat of the new government, whereas Prasad, who ultimately deferred to Nehru, was a low-key, respected leader, who was more attuned to the muted politics of the party organization than to the heat and dust of the hustings. However, their different personalities and ideological affinities created a semblance of intra-party competition.¹³ In office, Prasad became a natural rallying point for conservative opinion within the ruling party. In this way, both modern and conservative opinions within the ruling Congress as well as in the parliament felt that they were represented at the highest level of government, but neither felt exclusively in charge of the affairs of the nation. In sum, compromise and the ability to learn from experience became the method of functioning of India’s first cabinet.

Looking back, one can sense that during those vital, formative years, most of the bickering was kept well under wraps so that the public could see the leadership as united and coherent. This increased the legitimacy of the first post-Independence government considerably. Finally, the early presidents like Rajendra Prasad and S. Radhakrishnan were eminent statesmen who, though elected, were not seen as politicians. That could help attain the goal of parliamentary democracy where the state is both intensely political while still being viewed as slightly above everyday politics. These early conventions were set under the long joint stewardship of Nehru and Prasad and continued under Prasad's successor, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. The convention has held fast as India has seen a succession of eminent men—from different walks of life, professions, religions and social origins—occupy the high office of the President, and with Pratibha Patil, India had the first female President. Pranab Mukherji, the current occupant of this high office, though a life-long Congressman and an appointee of the UPA—the United Progressive Alliance (see Chapter 6 for the evolution of the UPA) government has nevertheless continued to be a part of the new regime led by the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). This remarkable continuity has generated both the space for opposition sentiments and stability despite regime change. The combination of prime ministerial leadership and presidential vigilance has become India's own way of making parliamentary democracy work (see Figure 4.2).

The fact that the Congress Party had already acquired governmental experience under colonial rule, and lent a sense of cohesion to the small number of key elites who oversaw the transition from colonial rule, were important aspects of governance in the early years of the Indian Republic. As we have already seen, the fact that both offices were held by leaders linked to the Congress Party facilitated cooperation during the early years of Independence. This informal practice has become increasingly difficult to sustain, as the hegemony of the Congress Party has given way to coalition governments. But politicians have used other ways of achieving coordination, such as extensive multi-party negotiation before presidential elections. Thus, even as presidential elections have become contentious, once in office, the President has slipped back into the aura of a dignified and detached authority, with little real power in the everyday political life of the nation.

This sense of consensual outcome, in the face of potentially divisive elections to the office of the President, is important for the smooth functioning of India's political institutions, because the Constitution confers an impressive range of powers on this office. The Constitution provides the President with the authority to suspend fundamental rights and declare a state of National Emergency under Article 352—to impose the 'President's rule' in a region—under which the State is ruled directly by the Union executive (Article 356), and there is a provision for Financial Emergency under Article 360. But, in true republican fashion, even while leaving the decision to the President and the Prime Minister, the Constitution requires the presidential proclamations to be laid before Parliament for approval within two months, failing which it will lapse.

The appointment of the highest elected executive of India appears democratic in contrast to many developing countries, where replacement of the chief executive often occurs by non-democratic means. However, some analysts point out that for 38 out of 60 years since Independence, India was ruled by members of the Nehru family.¹⁴ A more serious criticism is the failure of democratic government, resulting from authoritarian rule and compromising India's democratic government through the imposition of a national Emergency in 1975 (see Box 4.1).¹⁵ Dismissing elected governments at the regional level and applying direct rule from Delhi had become more frequent during the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi.

Prime Minister (Religion)	YEAR	President (Religion)
Jawaharlal Nehru (H) <i>Congress</i>	1947	
	1950	Rajendra Prasad (H)
	1962	Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (H)
Gulzarilal Nanda (H) Lai Bahadur Shastri (H) <i>Congress</i>	1964	
Gulzarilal Nanda (H) Indira Gandhi (H) <i>Congress</i>	1966	
	1967	Zakir Hussain (M)
	1969	Varahagiri Venkata Giri (H)
	1974	Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed (M)
Morarji Desai (H) Choudhary Charan Singh (H) <i>Janata</i>	1977	Basappa Danappa Jatti (H) Neelam Sanjiva Reddy (H)
Indira Gandhi (H) <i>Congress</i>	1980	
	1982	Giani Zail Singh (S)
Rajiv Gandhi (H) <i>Congress</i>	1984	
	1987	Ramaswamy Venkataraman (H)
Vishwanath Pratap Singh (H) <i>Janata Dal</i>	1989	
Chandra Shekhar (H) <i>Samajwadi Janata Dal</i>	1990	
P.V. Narasimha Rao (H) <i>Congress</i>	1991	
	1992	Shankar Dayal Sharma (H)
Atal Behari Vajpayee (H) <i>Bharatiya Janata Party</i>	1996	
H.D. Deve Gowda <i>Janata Dal</i>		
Inder Kumar Gujral (H) <i>Janata Dal</i>	1997	Kocheril Raman Narayanan (H)
Atal Behari Vajpayee (H) <i>Bharatiya Janata Party</i>	1998	
	2002	Abdul Kalam (M)
Manmohan Singh (S) <i>Congress</i>	2004	
	2007	Pratibha Devi Singh Patil (H)
Manmohan Singh (S) <i>Congress</i>	2009	
	2012	Pranab Mukherjee (H)
Narendra Modi (H) <i>Bharatiya Janata Party</i>	2014	

Figure 4.2 Presidents and Prime Ministers.

Source: Author's own.

BOX 4.1 THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY OF 1975–77

The national Emergency from 1975 to 1977 led to the suspension of fundamental rights, postponement of the General Election by one year, and incarceration of numerous opposition politicians, journalists and political activists opposed to the personal rule of Indira Gandhi. This was the first major trial of strength and resilience of India's democracy. Both the motivation behind its declaration and the relative ease with which it could be imposed exposed the vulnerability of the Indian political system to authoritarian rule. However, the fact that Indira Gandhi was defeated at the polls in 1977 because the 'excesses committed during the Emergency' is a precedence of popular sanction against authoritarian rule.

President K.R. Narayanan set an important precedent in 1998 by turning down a recommendation of the Central Cabinet to impose President's rule on the State of Bihar.¹⁶ This precedent made it politically more difficult for the central government to intervene in regional governance. However, the provision for imposing President's rule in a State where lawful governance has become difficult to sustain under Article 356 of the Constitution is still available to the Union government and acts as a safety net for governance in India. The temporary suspension of democracy rather than becoming terminal, as in many developing countries, is often used as a transitional measure. It is seen more as a self-corrective procedure written into India's Constitution.¹⁷

The connecting link between the Cabinet and the President as well as between the Cabinet and Parliament is the Prime Minister.¹⁸ The Prime Minister's role continues to be, as Nehru used to describe it, 'the lynchpin of Government' (see Figure 4.1). Nevertheless, the coalitional nature of contemporary Indian politics requires much more consultation with other parties, sometimes leading to the open articulation of defiance against the authority of the Prime Minister—a situation that would have been unthinkable during the days of Nehru. Together with the ministers, the Prime Minister controls and coordinates the departments of government and determines policy through the submission of a programme for parliamentary action. When the Prime Minister commands the majority in the Lok Sabha, his government is secure. If he is defeated on any major issue, or if a no-confidence motion is passed, he must, by the conventions of cabinet government, resign.¹⁹

Other practices of cabinet government have become institutionalized in India as well. Cabinet meetings presided over by the Prime Minister with only ministers of cabinet rank in attendance, are the highest policymaking body in India. The Cabinet provides a balance to the authority of the Prime Minister with its collective weight. The principle of collective responsibility was sorely tested during the tenure of Indira Gandhi, whose authoritarian tendencies and distrust of colleagues reduced the Cabinet's role as a source of policy and administrative leadership, in sharp contrast to previous practice. The phenomenon was described as 'deinstitutionalization'.²⁰ Subsequent governments have restored the conventions of parliamentary government and the principle of collective responsibility.

The towering stature of Nehru as Prime Minister had overshadowed the principle of collective responsibility of the Cabinet, but subsequent occupants of the office have shown how the Cabinet can project a leader into national prominence if the potential is

there. Such was the case with the diminutive Lal Bahadur Shastri who, during the Indo-Pak war of 1965–66, swiftly rose to prominence as a national leader.²¹ In the 1990s, the steady rise in the stature of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was a testimony to the institutionalization of the office. Rao is remembered as the pioneer under whose leadership India's moribund economy was liberalised. He had brought into office the reputation of a back-room operator more than a charismatic leader. Starting as a temporary replacement for Rajiv Gandhi and then as a compromise candidate for leadership, Rao brought about radical changes in the management of the economy, without a solid majority in the Lok Sabha. His leadership skills were immensely valuable in ensuring a smooth transition after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and during the politically polarised period following the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in 1992.

Rao maintained a delicate balance between the opposing factions of the Congress Party. So deeply entrenched are the principles of consensus and accommodation as core values of the political system that even after the end of Congress dominance and the coming of non-Congress governments, there has been no radical discontinuity in civil servants, policy mechanisms or even policy orientations.

As Prime Ministers, Rao's successors, first H.D. Deve Gowda and then Inder Kumar Gujral, followed very much in the mould of consensus and accommodation. The real test only came in 1998 with the Vajpayee government inducting into the central government individuals who lacked previous ministerial experience. However, the BJP government maintained continuity in the areas of reform and security policy. The dexterity with which Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, supported by the UPA coalition consisting of 20 political parties, continued the tradition of prime ministerial leadership, despite the long shadow of Sonia Gandhi as President of the Congress Party on his government, are further testimony to the institutionalization of the practice of consultation and cohesion at the highest echelons of government in India.

The latest twist to the story comes from the record of Mr Narendra Modi's early years in office as Prime Minister which have seen him gaining the stature of a global leader—but finding it trying to translate the global profile into a cohesive and effective agenda for the transformation of India's domestic politics and economy. From 'tea-boy to Prime Minister', Mr Modi has established the fact that ambition, consistent organisational work, astute judgement and vision can help transcend humble origin and pave the way towards the highest political office in India.²² Mid-way through his mandate, the Prime Ministership of Mr Modi has survived major electoral defeats in Delhi and Bihar States and the initiatives like 'swachha bharat' (clean India) that have not been spectacularly successful, but some of his message privileging development over partisan ideology, have found into the mainstream political discourse of India. Just as his larger-than-life image has become a little shop-worn by the exigencies of everyday politics, the institutional arrangement of India has also learnt to cope with this demanding and visionary Prime Minister. 'Business as usual, only a little better organised and less corrupt than its predecessor' appears to be the most common mid-term verdict on the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi.

The Parliament

Even while they campaigned against British rule in India, the leaders of India's Freedom Movement aspired to a parliamentary democracy modelled on British institutions. For many of them, schooled in the British tradition, Independence brought the opportunity

to design India's Constitution. The main inspiration came from Britain, but with important differences. The principle of hereditary membership of landed aristocrats in the House of Lords has no equivalence in India. Besides, unlike Britain, India is a federation and has a written constitution whose tenets are zealously protected by an independent judiciary. The American constitution and practice have cast their long shadow on India's institutional arrangement.

The Parliament of India consists of two houses; the *Lok Sabha* (lower house), and the *Rajya Sabha* (upper house) or Council of States (see Figure 4.1).²³ As such, the Rajya Sabha has some features of the US Senate. In the same vein, reflecting the philosophy of social justice that underpinned the Freedom Movement, the system provides for some special features, such as the guaranteed representation of *Dalits*—originating from castes that formerly carried the stigma of untouchability—and tribals in the Lok Sabha, through a quota system of 'reserved seats'. This practice, supervised by the independent Election Commission of India, ensures that the number of tribals and Dalits in the Lok Sabha is close to their proportional weight in the electorate. The principle of guaranteed representation of former untouchables and tribals applies to lower legislations like State assemblies and village *panchayats* as well. In addition, women's representation is guaranteed by law to the tune of one-third of the seats in the lowest level of legislatures—the *gram panchayats*—in India. Efforts to extend guaranteed representation of women through a quota system to State assemblies and the Parliament have not yet been successful thanks to the opposition of left-socialist political parties which suspect that higher representation of women—more likely to come from the educated upper strata—would create a comparative disadvantage for them.

The Lok Sabha consists of 545 members: 543 are directly elected and two are nominated by the President of India as representatives of the Anglo-Indian community constituted of the progeny of the mixed-race population—yet another legacy of colonial rule, written into the norms regulating the Transfer of Power. Elections of the members of the Lok Sabha take place on the basis of general single-member constituencies with simple majority voting rule. The term of the Lok Sabha is five years unless it is extended because of emergency conditions. The Lok Sabha can be dissolved before the end of its five-year mandate, or extended beyond five years by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister (the latter has happened only once, during the Emergency of 1975–77).

The Parliament is designed to be primarily an instrument of democratic accountability. The Constitution specifies that the Lok Sabha must meet at least twice a year, with no more than six months between sessions. The business of Parliament, avidly reported in the press, is transacted primarily in English or Hindi, but provision is made for the use of other Indian languages as well. Keeping to the British practice, a number of parliamentary committees impart a sense of specialization for the technical scrutiny of legislation and continuity. Membership of the committees is based on seniority and continuity in the committees where the MPs are placed, provided they get re-elected. Some of the committees are primarily concerned with organisation and parliamentary procedure. Others, notably finance committees—the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee—act as watchdogs over the executive. Specific committees scrutinize the budget and governmental expenditure, appropriations and allocations for specific purposes, the exercise of delegated power, and the implementation of ministerial assurances and promises. India has followed the British practice of inducting members of the opposition into senior positions in parliamentary committees. Since members of Parliament usually stay with committees to which they are allocated in

the event of their re-election, individual members, regardless of party affiliation, can acquire very senior positions within the committee structure. This practice has contributed greatly to the identity and autonomy of specific parliamentary committees and to the overall capacity and stature of the Parliament.

The first hour of the parliamentary day (known as the ‘zero hour’) is devoted to questions that bring the ministers to public scrutiny. Written questions are submitted in advance—a process that extends the principle of parliamentary and public accountability to the bureaucracy—along with supplementary questions, which test the minister’s ability to master the technical details of governance.

The Lok Sabha’s ultimate control over the executive lies in the motion of no confidence that can bring down a government. The Parliament’s right to dismiss a government which has lost its majority had remained in abeyance during the long years of one-party dominance. However, during the last two decades, as the politics of coalitions, has taken root and single-majority parties forming a government have become a distant memory, the power of the Parliament to hold governments to account has come out in full force. Still, this has not created the kind of paralysis that occurred in the Fourth Republic of post-war France. The current number of leaders with ministerial experience both in the government and in the opposition ensures that the Parliament is both the scene of continuous challenge to the government, as well as an opportunity to collaborate in the interest of governance.²⁴

The Rajya Sabha was seen merely as a ‘talking shop’ during the earlier periods of Congress hegemony when the party dominated both houses of Parliament. Because most of the real power of accountability and finance are vested in the lower house, the centre of political gravity naturally lies beyond the reach of the smaller, and constitutionally less powerful, upper house. Still, the increasingly competitive character of the Indian political process has enhanced the importance of the Rajya Sabha too. However, the potential power of the Rajya Sabha to block legislation came vigorously to the fore during the early years of the Modi government. Despite having a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, it was politically thwarted in the Rajya Sabha where the combined strength of the Opposition parties could be mobilised to stop the passage of many important bills. The Rajya Sabha has thus emerged as the main political focus of resistance to attempts by the Modi government to bring about radical legislation to transform land rights, insurance and labour laws.

The Rajya Sabha consists of a maximum of 250 members of whom 12 are nominated by the President for their ‘special knowledge or practical experience’ in literature, science, art or social service. This decorative euphemism barely conceals the fact that the nominated members can be counted on, to support the government to which they owe their nomination. Reflecting the federal principle, the allocation of the remaining seats corresponds to the size of the population of the various regions, except that small States are given a somewhat larger share than their actual population proportion would imply. Thus, tiny Tripura with a population of 3,191,168 has one member in the Rajya Sabha, whereas Uttar Pradesh, with 190,891,000 people, has 31 members. This significant departure from the American practice where the federal units, regardless of size, have the same number of seats means that the members of the Rajya Sabha identify more with their parties than with the States they represent. The members of the State legislative assembly elect members of the Rajya Sabha for a term of six years. The terms are staggered, so elections are held for one-third of the seats every two years. Thus, whereas the Lok Sabha becomes a static representation of the political profile of the

country every five years, the Rajya Sabha remains a more continuous representation of the changing profile of the country as every second year it introduces new members. This, in the past, has been a boon to parties that have lost their majority in the Lok Sabha but have managed to keep some of their parliamentary influence intact because of their continued dominance of the Rajya Sabha, whose support becomes necessary to get legislation through the Parliament. The electoral procedure of the Parliament thus ensures the empowerment of oppositions and curbs the potential for authoritarian use of power on the part of a ruling majority.

The role of the Parliament is normally confined to the scrutiny of legislation for its technical aspects, because, reflecting the conventions of parliamentary democracy, most of the initiatives for legislation lie with the Cabinet. The legislators do not have the finance or the personnel that the political system of the United States bestows on its members of Congress. Indian committee hearings are not public occasions and therefore, do not have the power of US congressional or Senate committee hearings. As such, they only provide a forum for wide political consultation.²⁵ More recently, partly as a result of the introduction of televised proceedings of the parliament, many members have taken to the political theatre as a method of enhancing their profile. In the Lok Sabha, the members of the Opposition have taken to interrupting the proceedings as a method of protest.

The legislative process follows the British practice overall. Laws are initiated in the form of government bills or private members' bills. The latter are more an opportunity to air grievances and to draw attention since few, if any, ever become law. The initiation of most legislation clearly lies with the government. All bills except money bills — with implications for spending, revenue, borrowing or India's financial reserves—can be introduced in either house. The Ministry of Law and the Attorney General of India are consulted on legal and constitutional aspects. Ordinary bills go through three readings in each house. The second reading is the most vital because it is at this stage that the bill receives the most detailed and minute examination and may be referred to a Select Committee or a Joint Committee of both houses of Parliament. Again, these committees do not have the same standing or resources as the committees in the US House of Representatives or Senate. They are neither called upon to investigate the affairs of the government in public hearing nor asked to approve executive appointments. Their strength within the Indian system derives from the tradition of bipartisanship which, as in the United Kingdom, creates great confidence and respect for them within the government as well as the opposition parties.

Once both houses pass a bill, it requires the assent of the President to become a law. This assent is not a mere formality. The President sometimes asks for technical details and expert advice to examine the constitutional implications of a bill before giving his assent. Potentially, this is a formidable threat in view of the fragility of coalition politics where a united stand by the Cabinet against an adversary is relatively difficult to sustain. A President determined to delay or obstruct legislation can do so through the simple expedient of not returning a bill, with or without assent, before the end of the current session of the Parliament. This, in effect, can kill a bill, requiring the government to go through the entire legislative process of introducing it in the next session. If the President withholds his assent and the Parliament passes the bill again, he or she is obliged to give it the presidential assent. But these are exceptional situations. Unlike in the United States, the President is not expected to take legislative initiative, and, in contrast to the United States, there is no concept of a presidential 'veto' as a source of influence on the policy process or an exercise of checks and balances.²⁶

As a bill must be passed by both houses, joint sessions are provided in order to resolve conflicts. Because of its larger size, the Lok Sabha plays a dominant role in such meetings. In matters relating to money bills, the Lok Sabha even has exclusive authority. The Rajya Sabha may only recommend changes; it cannot initiate, delay or reject. When the majority of the ruling party or coalition in the Lok Sabha is narrow and the opposition has a majority in the Rajya Sabha, the potential peril of defeat in a joint session encourages the government to think in terms of cooperation rather than confrontation. This happened after 1977 when the Congress Party lost to the Janata Party in the polls, and thus lost its majority in the Lok Sabha. Because only one-third of the seats in the Rajya Sabha are up for election every two years, the Congress continued to hold a majority in that house. When the Janata Party set about amending the Constitution to purge it of the authoritarian measures that the Congress had introduced during the preceding Emergency (such as the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution), it realized that it lacked the requisite majority in both houses. A compromise was struck and the Janata Party could achieve only part of its legislative objectives in the form of the 44th Amendment. The parliamentary elections of 1996, 1998 and 2004 have produced situations where the two houses of the Parliament do not have the same kind of majority coalitions. Consequently, the Rajya Sabha has gained in power and begun to play an independent role in matters of scrutiny and accountability.²⁷

Overall, however, unlike the American senate, the Rajya Sabha is far from the co-equal of the Lok Sabha. Nor is it a hereditary ‘talking shop’ like the British House of Lords. But, over the years, it has acquired its own profile as a second chamber. With its less politically charged atmosphere and a more senior membership including people who are not professional politicians but represent special interests, the Rajya Sabha brings an additional element of representation to the Parliament. Together, the two houses complement one another and add to the depth and complexity of the principle of popular representation.

The lack of party discipline is the nemesis of parliamentary democracy, especially in countries like India where modern institutions lack deep historical roots. Cross-party voting and defections can drive a government to paralysis and reduce parliamentary process to personal rule or anarchy. The sudden governmental instability during the 1960s in the Indian States that resulted from the end of Congress hegemony gave India a warning of this potential danger.²⁸ Since then, government control over legislation has been considerably strengthened by the passage of the Anti-Defection Law. Under this act, voting against the party line is considered a defection, which leads to the loss of the seat by the member. That, and the disapproval of political opportunism by the electorate have succeeded in inducing a degree of stability at the level of the central and State governments.

The Parliament has constituted many committees to help discharge its functions, some of which are quite technical and require special expertise and experience. The committee system, which draws on the British parliamentary committees as precedents, goes back to 1854 when the Legislative Council, established by the colonial government, appointed its own committees to help with its functions. There are several ad hoc committees, which include select committees and joint committees. The second type of committees are called standing committees and include those on petitions and privileges, those on ‘government assurance’, those dealing directly with the functioning of the house and, most important of all, the three financial committees, namely, the Estimates Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings. The main function of the Estimates Committee, set up in 1950, is to

scrutinize the estimates of expenditure of the government, and to suggest measures, to introduce economy and efficiency. Its composition reflects the strength of political parties in the Parliament. The Public Accounts Committee which first came into being in India in 1923 is a watchdog non-partisan body whose main function is to scrutinize the accounts of the government to see if the sums granted by the house for expenditure by the government of India have been spent in the manner and for the purpose for which they were granted. The Public Accounts Committee can draw on the expertise of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India to facilitate the technical aspects of its work. The Committee on Public Undertakings constituted in 1964, consists of members drawn from both houses of the Parliament. Its main function is to examine the reports and accounts of specific bodies involving public funds, to see if they are being managed on sound business principles, and according to procedure established by law.

The Judiciary

The Constitution of India committed itself to individual rights of equality and liberty and group rights to identity. However, it did not incorporate the American concept of natural justice where the Supreme Court is the ultimate defender of the ‘natural’ rights of the individual, as interpreted by the Court.²⁹ The schooling of India’s leaders in parliamentary politics goes back to the period of colonial rule when parliamentary norms—necessarily restricted for the Indian colonies—became the basis of their complex relationship that alternated between competition and collaboration with the British rulers of India. The conciliation of the principles of parliamentary sovereignty and individual rights is facilitated by a judicial system that is both independent from external control and free to interpret the law. Originally, it was intended to be supreme only within the ‘procedure established by law’, the law being the domain of the legislature subsidiary to it in authority. On numerous occasions, however, the court has vehemently defended its exclusive right to exercise control over legislation.

The Supreme Court has original and exclusive jurisdiction in disputes between the Union government and one or more States and in disputes between two or more States. It has appellate jurisdiction in any case, civil or criminal, that involves, by its own certification, a substantial question of law in the meaning and intent of the Constitution. The Supreme Court is the interpreter and guardian of the Constitution, the supreme law of the land. Unlike the British system, where no court may hold an act of Parliament invalid, all legislation passed in India’s national or State legislatures must conform to the Constitution. The constitutionality of any enactment is determined under the power of judicial review by the Supreme Court. Shortly after the promulgation of the Constitution, litigation over the right to property had opened up a contest between the Supreme Court and the Parliament over supremacy with regard to the final word on legislation. The court had conservatively defined private property in the sense of the value that it would fetch in the market, whereas the Parliament, seeking to promote egalitarian values, had enacted land reform legislation that set compensation for land acquired by the government at less than market price. The landmark judgment on *Golaknath and others vs. the State of Punjab* (1967), where the court had ruled a law *ultra vires*, was eventually overturned by an amendment of the constitution.

The Supreme Court finally developed the doctrine of ‘basic structure’ in the case of *Kesavananda Bharati vs. the State of Kerala* (1973) in which it held that matters which are deemed to be basic to the Constitution cannot be amended by the Parliament. A remarkable feature of judicial review in India is the power of the Supreme Court to rule a

constitutional amendment invalid if it violates the ‘basic structure’ of the Constitution. The final word on what the basic structure is rests with the Supreme Court, but the scope of judicial review in India is not as wide as in the United States of America.³⁰

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is another area where the Supreme Court has become active recently regarding judicial policy-making. It is an innovative practice under which an aggrieved party (including judges of the court themselves) can file a case in the public interest and have it heard on a priority basis. The practice, which has dispensed with some cumbersome practices associated with litigation gives citizens direct access to judicial intervention.³¹ However, some allege that excessive judicial activism can undermine the goal of ‘separation of powers’, which is vital to the Constitution.

Although the modern legal system has largely displaced traditional customary law, traditional groups use the modern system for their own ends. The Supreme Court has dealt with such contentious issues as the Ayodhya case, which brought the dispute into the political system rather than let it slip out of the process of adjudication altogether (see Box 4.2, below). The Court’s landmark decisions—for example, its ruling that *hindutva*, the core of the ideology of the BJP, was part of Indian culture and not necessarily of a religion³²—have deeply influenced the nature of political discourse in India. Recent survey findings rate the Indian Supreme Court along with the Election Commission as the most trustworthy of institutions³³ (see Table 4.2).

Since the core judicial doctrine of the Constitution of India puts the ‘procedure established by law’ as superior to the American doctrine of ‘natural justice’, the Supreme Court was initially accorded a status below the Parliament but above the national executive in terms of authoritative interpretation of the law. But gradually the Supreme Court has asserted its supremacy in such matters as well. This evolution was facilitated by the steady erosion of the massive legislative majorities since the early decades after Independence, the rise of media influence, and the mobilization of interest groups at the national level.

The Emergency Rule of Indira Gandhi (1975–77) where the court had failed to defend basic rights of citizens, dented its authority and autonomy, but since then the Court has bounced back.³⁴ The Court has reached the highest level of esteem and trust in the eyes of the Indian public by drawing on the initiatives taken and innovations made in judicial practice and procedure. It exercises wide judicial review, including subjects ranging from the highly abstract and technical, such as personal law and industrial jurisprudence, to topical and controversial issues like PIL. The Supreme Court has also appointed itself as the guardian of vulnerable social groups and neglected areas of public life, such as the environment. This is one of the most celebrated and contested innovations of India’s Supreme Court.

More recent data (2009), which uses different levels of measurement, show a broadly similar picture, with a small but significant improvement of trust in the police, where the numbers expressing a great deal of trust have gone up from 13 percent in 1999 to 23.8 percent in 2009 (see Table 4.3).

Today, the Supreme Court and the High Courts of India are the most important symbols of liberty, secularism and social justice. It could all, of course, have turned out in a completely different way, as in many changing societies where the pace of political mobilization overtakes the rule of law. That India did not follow this tragic course only goes to show the long evolution of the judicial procedure under colonial rule, which continues to be an effective and important legacy, and it stresses the important role played by lawyers in India’s freedom struggle.

Table 4.2 Trust in institutions (1999)

	<i>Great deal</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
Election Commission	45.9	31.1	23.0
Judiciary	41.6	34.2	24.2
Local government	39.0	37.8	23.2
State government	37.2	43.6	19.2
Central government	35.2	42.5	22.3
Elected representatives	19.9	40.4	39.7
Political parties	17.4	43.6	39.0
Government officials	17.2	40.4	42.3
Police	13.0	29.9	57.1

Source: Mitra and Singh (1999), p. 260.

Table 4.3 Trust in institutions (2009)

	<i>Great deal</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Not very much</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>No opinion</i>
Election Commission	35.9	23.7	10.1	6.9	23.4
Judiciary	42.9	25.5	10.2	5.6	15.8
Local government	37.0	32.4	10.9	5.7	10.4
State government	39.5	34.1	8.5	4.5	13.3
Central government	40.8	33.6	6.6	3.7	15.2
Elected representatives	18.1	29.6	18.8	15.3	18.3
Political parties	18.1	28.2	20.5	16.0	17.2
Government officials	21.6	27.9	18.7	14.2	17.6
Police	23.8	26.6	15.5	18.6	15.5

Source: NES 2009 pp. 91–93.

The Bureaucracy

The development of a professionally organized, politically neutral and accountable bureaucratic apparatus is one of the main achievements of the Indian political system.³⁵ The Indian bureaucracy is a complex system that combines national or all-India services with regional and local services, as well as technical and managerial staff running public sector undertakings. Public recruitment on merit with stiff competitive examinations is the general rule, with political appointments such as those in the United States of America, being the rare exception.

The main branches of the bureaucracy like the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) retain some of the features of their pre-Independence structures, but like the rest of the top services of India, they have been re-organized to create a federal balance in recruitment. Special attention is given to the representation of the former untouchables, tribal communities and women. Recruitment is supervised by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)—an independent advisory body appointed by the President—and extensive new facilities have been created for training new recruits. The recruitment from aspiring candidates is conducted centrally, but once selected, successful candidates are allocated to regional cadres. As such, the IAS—the new steel frame of India—is composed of separate cadres for each region where they are expected to acquire a deep knowledge of the region, its customs, language and the political history of its relations with the other regions and the centre. This helps

strengthen federal links because regional loyalties are balanced by the provision that at least half of the members of the IAS cadre come from outside the concerned State. This practice creates language problems for officers who originate from other states; on the other hand, it also encourages India's top administrators to learn the prevailing local language, contributing to the process of nation-building and cross-regional linkages. Members of a district administration seek to combine rule of law, efficient management and coordination, and, increasingly, local democracy. These values are often hard to reconcile in practice: the extent to which a regional government succeeds in achieving this ideal acts as a crucial parameter of how successful it is in achieving the goal of democratic governance.

Statutory Commissions

There are several public commissions provided for by the Constitution or set up by an Act of Parliament, that are non-partisan and non-official in character and which assist the process of governance through authoritative expert advice and decisions.³⁶ The main function of the Chairman and members of the UPSC appointed by the President of India (Art. 315) is to conduct entrance examinations for the top civil service. Its main task is to ensure the professionalism and political neutrality of the civil service. The remit of the Election Commission, appointed by the President of India (Art. 324), is to ensure free and fair elections. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, who is appointed by the President for a period of six years (or up to the age of 65), is responsible for carrying out independent audits of the accounts of the government (Art. 148).³⁷

The Finance Commission is an independent commission whose members are also appointed by the President. Its structure and function are laid down in Article 280 of the Constitution. It has the vital function of arbitrating between the centre and federal States regarding the division of tax incomes between them. The National Commission for Backward Classes was set up in 1993 to oversee the implementation of the provision for the reservation of 27 percent of jobs in central services for members of the OBCs, as defined in the Constitution. The Commission was appointed by the President under Article 340, providing for conditions of work that ensure the autonomy and independence of the Commission. Other statutory bodies of this genre are the National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Minorities and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These commissions and statutory bodies have become an important part of the political landscape of India, and figures of avid interest for the media. They have added breadth and depth to the process of governance, rule of law and accountability.

The Military

The military and paramilitary forces of India deserve special attention because, unlike in Pakistan and Bangladesh where the military has routinely interfered with the functioning of democratic institutions—and often, staged military coups that have put an end to democratic government—in India, they have emerged as staunch defenders of democracy. Although the number of paramilitary units has increased significantly and the number of men in uniform has gone up since Independence, the civilian government of India remains firmly in control. In contrast to many developing countries, especially in Africa, the Indian middle classes have opted for civil service and professional

jobs under colonial rule, and political careers since Independence. In India, this has contributed to the professional and apolitical character of the army. Consequently, the officer corps of India, traditionally accustomed to civilian control and indoctrinated with the values of secular democracy and the rule of law during their training, has remained nonpartisan, even during political turmoil.

The absence of a leadership vacuum at the upper and middle levels of the political system and the divided character of the command structure of the military in India are other contributory factors to the relative immunity of Indian democracy from a military takeover. Beyond the military, a large police force of about a million men and women is the second line of defence of the political system against the danger of the breakdown of law and order. The limits, to the role of the army as a guardian and custodian of democratic governance, are being tested in several ‘disturbed areas’ of India such as Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East. In these troubled regions of India, the political community is divided, a significant section of the population feels alienated, and insurgency is deeply entrenched. There is a lot of controversy over the continued presence of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, passed by the Indian Parliament in 1958, which grants special powers of search and arrest to the armed forces, and immunity from prosecution, but not in a manner that puts them above Indian penal law. The Act was originally intended for Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It was extended to Kashmir in 1960. Demands for its repeal, or confining it to specific areas of the States have been voiced by social activists, lawyers and some political parties, but on the other hand, the periodic outbreak of militancy and terrorist attacks keeps pressure on the state and the armed forces to retain the act, at least temporarily, in the larger interest of the security of the state and safety of the citizens.

Under the constitutional division of powers, law and order is a ‘State subject’. As such, the basic components of the Indian police are recruited, trained, and deployed by the regional governments. The central government also exercises considerable power over law and order management through different methods. First, there are several special police forces who are recruited and trained by the central government. In principle, central forces can be sent to trouble spots in the regions at the request of the State governments, and once deployed, they are placed under the orders of State officials. The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police normally belong to the IAS and the IPS, both of which are central services. As such, these officials typically have some accountability to the central government in their professional judgements. However, as the situation in Ayodhya in 1992 and Gujarat in 2002 revealed (see Box 4.2), even the presence of a large paramilitary force is no guarantee of the effective management of law and order when the central and State governments do not agree on the policy to be followed.³⁸

It should be clear from the above accounts that despite the formal separation of civil and military authorities in India, the armed forces play an important role in India though not as decisively as in Pakistan or with as much influence as in Sri Lanka under President Rajapaksha.³⁹ In extreme cases, therefore, the Constitution provides for direct rule by the centre under Article 356 (President’s Rule—as already mentioned earlier in the ‘Executive’ section). Central intervention in Punjab and Kashmir occurred under similar conditions, where the regional government proved either unwilling or unable to take effective measures. Effective law and order management certainly contributed to the restoration of the political process in Punjab. The regions of India and the state itself continuously share knowledge of law and order management with one another, which results in the creation of new forces or major changes in equipment, training and service conditions.

BOX 4.2 INTER-COMMUNITY VIOLENCE, AYODHYA (1992) AND ITS AFTERMATH, GODHRA (2002)

In the northern State of Uttar Pradesh, Ayodhya, famous as a city of Hindu pilgrimage, became the scene of an unprecedented conflict between Hindus and Muslims on December 6, 1992. A long-standing controversy between the two religious groups was the Babri Masjid, a mosque built in 1528 by the first Mughal emperor Babur, which Hindus claim stood where a temple once marked the birthplace of Rama. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—then head of the State government—launched a *Ratha Yatra* (a holy chariot in ritual procession towards a holy site) to Ayodhya in order to destroy the mosque and to rebuild in its place a Hindu temple, but it could not discipline the frenzied crowd. The mosque was demolished by the *kar sevaks* (activists) of two front organizations of the Hindu-nationalist movement, followed by communal riots in various parts of India. The BJP's dilemma became apparent again during the communal clashes in Godhra in February 2002, on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Babri mosque's destruction, when an alleged attack by a Muslim mob on a train with Hindu activists returning from a demonstration in Ayodhya resulted in more than fifty dead, mostly women and children. This incident triggered a pogrom on the Muslim minority in the State of Gujarat, leaving several thousand affected. The opposition accused the BJP-led State government of complicity with anti-Muslim mobs; the government, on the other hand, defended itself with statistics showing that about one-third of the casualties were caused by the police shooting under orders, mostly against Hindu mobs.

Political recruitment

If political participation is a minimum criterion of democratic rule, then a persuasive case can be made that India has caught up with the liberal democratic states of the West. However, to make the case for a high level of political socialization, participation on its own is necessary but not sufficient. For political systems to be deemed to be a consolidated and embedded democracy, participation needs to be ensconced within an appropriate normative structure and institutional arrangement. Here one can consider two further sources of evidence: political recruitment to the highest legislature of the country and the social composition of the decision-making elites at the level of the region and locality. Political recruitment is important because once people have knowledge of the normative structure of the system, and the skill with which to engage in political transactions, the main cleavages of society find a way to be represented in the decision-making bodies. Of course, the representative character of the elected elite is unlikely to reach a perfect statistical ratio with social cleavages because of very small groups, thanks partly to the 'first-past-the-post' system of voting, tend to get penalized. However, by looking at the data over time and across different regions one can draw some general conclusions. The percentage

of politicians of rural origin has grown over the years, and correspondingly, the weight of ‘agriculturists’ has grown as well. The percentage of women has doubled but is still far below their share of the population.⁴⁰ The percentage of Brahmins has dropped significantly. The former untouchables and tribals, who continue to occupy a little over one-fifth of the membership, reflect their weight in the population of the country thanks to the system of ‘reservation’ which sets a quota for these underprivileged groups. Quite interestingly, though there is no quota system for the election of Muslims to the Parliament (and the electoral rules do not provide for proportional representation), their total number is not far below their proportion in the Indian population.

The picture of the social base of the national elite that we get from the Lok Sabha is reinforced by the data on local elites. The structure of *Panchayati Raj*, following the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, which requires one-third of the seats in *panchayats* to be filled by women, has become an important recruiting ground for new leaders and a school for training these potential leaders in the art of governance.

Political participation and the recruitment of new elites act as powerful agents of political socialization. The data on efficacy and legitimacy present two interesting facets of political socialization in India (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). Efficacy, which measures individuals’ self-perception regarding the state, shows a steady rise over the recent past. The legitimacy of the political system, as seen by a representative sample of all Indians, has also climbed, from 68.8 percent in 1996 to 72.2 percent in 2004. Though this has declined somewhat in the 2009 study, one can still see a high degree of efficacy and legitimacy in the Indian electorate. This creates an ironical situation where ordinary people feel empowered enough to ‘kick the rascals out’. When the vital foundations of democracy are threatened by political adventurers, resistance grows, and eventually democratic institutions re-emerge. Once again, as one can see from the example of the national Emergency of 1975–77 (see Box 4.1), the Indian political system has experienced situations where the potential for the growth of authoritarian regimes in the wake of the rise of popular authoritarianism has been contained, thanks to the institutional arrangement built into the Constitution, and competitive parliamentary democracy has eventually bounced back.

Conclusion

The doctrines of ‘separation’ and ‘division of powers’, crucial to democracy, evolved incrementally over centuries in European democracies. In India, democratic institutions are not the outcome of a similar evolution. Instead, democracy was to be built ‘from above’, under the guidance of the modern state. This was no mean feat. The chapter has shown the role of the Constitution,⁴¹ political leadership, the institutional arrangement that combines strength with accountability and most of all, India’s countervailing forces that balance different wings of government against one another have contributed to the transition to democracy and its consolidation, and the creation of democratic governance.

Despite trials and tribulations during the eventful years following since Independence, the modern, secular and democratic vision of the Constitution, and its core components have remained largely intact. With over a hundred amendments, the Constitution, both rigid and flexible, has succeeded in coping with a rapidly changing political and social environment. In consequence, despite local conflicts, insurgency in parts of the

vast country, and bouts of inter-community violence, the democratic state and the political process are firmly in control. The main institutions such as the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, the organs of law and order, and a plethora of independent commissions set up under the Constitution have gone from strength to strength. The institutions have gained in autonomy but remained firmly integrated within the larger structure of the state. This singular achievement sets India apart from her neighbours with whom she shares the colonial origin of her modern institutions.

The founders of the Constitution of India instilled several core principles of Anglo-Saxon constitutionalism and rule of law into the letter and spirit of the Constitution and the institutional arrangements of the country. These values, such as the primacy of the individual, limitations on the power of the state, the legitimacy of social plurality, egalitarianism, the rule of law, and accountability of the holders of power to the citizen, sometimes militate against Indian tradition, steeped as it is in the values of social hierarchy.

Nehru's India was not alone among newly emerging democracies in undertaking such ambitious programmes, but it was one of the few to succeed in making a successful transition to democracy and defending the institutions originally designed by the founding fathers. The chapter has argued that while the colonial legacy played an important role in making this possible, the innovative and strategic use of institutions by the leaders of post-Independence India, certainly helped the political system considerably in reaching its goals. India has known how to subdue social power and bring social notables into the legitimate political arena, transform rebels into stakeholders, and find a political niche for most opinions and interests in the country within the space of complex and dynamic institutional arrangements. The juxtaposition of separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial wings of the state and division of powers between the three levels of the state—the central, regional and the local—has created new political spaces, whose shifting boundaries are influenced by the countervailing forces at all levels of the system.

The leaders of modern India have been inheritors as much as creators. As already suggested in the introductory chapter and in the analysis of the role of the past in the making of the present in Chapter 2, the institutions of India epitomize the re-use of institutional innovation of previous generations. Even when foreign designs were used, they were painstakingly and meticulously adapted to local conditions, context and culture. They are bound together in a functional whole, generating among them a field of countervailing forces that produce the capacity of the political system to maintain equilibrium. As we have seen in the case of Public Interest Litigation (PIL), or the development of the Basic Structure Doctrine, the institutional arrangement has generated the resilience to make up for a deficit in any particular corner. We move next to India's federal structure—yet another foreign design, which has been conspicuously successful in adapting to the Indian context.

Notes

- 1 The gap hypothesis and the negative relationship between social mobilization and political institutionalization is discussed by Huntington (1968) on p. 55. Also see Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.
- 2 Institutions have been at the forefront of research and teaching on Indian politics. In consequence, one can draw on a rich body of useful sources. Two of the best sources for ready reference are Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds. *Public Institutions in India*:

Performance and Design (Delhi: OUP, 2005) and Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* (Delhi: OUP, 2010). For a neo-institutional explanation of what holds institutions together and what makes them work, see Subrata Mitra, "Effects of Institutional Arrangements on Political Stability in South Asia", *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (1999), pp. 405–428.

- 3 Huntington (1968). These criteria of institutionalization are discussed in pp. 8–24.
- 4 This period of state-formation, constitution making and introduction of governmental accountability has been thoroughly analysed by Kothari (1970) and Morris-Jones (1987).
- 5 Little realized at the time, in retrospect, the frenzy of violence that marked Independence and the Partition of India can be attributed to this hiatus between authority of the state and social power.
- 6 Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) is the best known of this scholarly genre.
- 7 That said, one must make a reference here to the rich pre-modern political tradition of India as one can see in Kautilya's Arthashastra—a comprehensive treatise on governance. The flow of these norms through the centuries that separate this glorious political tradition and the post-independence constitution is the main theme of Mitra and Liebig, *Kautilya's Arthashastra: An Intellectual Portrait—Classical Roots of Modern Politics in India* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2016). Also see Patrick Olivelle, *The Law Code of Manu*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) "The King should direct all his servants to work for the good of the people", p. XXXV. "The Kautilyan ruler is not an omnipotent autocrat and the Kautilyan state is no 'Asian despotism'. Instead, Kautilyan monarchy means a patrimonial state in which the ruler's decision-making is based on collective deliberation with his advisers and government officials. Kautilya's unequivocal message is: 'lonely decisions are' bad for the state and the ruler himself." Mitra and Liebig (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2016, Chapter 2, Chapter 7).
- 8 See Jivanta Schoettli, *Vision and strategy in Indian politics: Jawaharlal Nehru's policy choices and the designing of political institutions* (London: Routledge, 2011) chapter six for a detailed discussion of these five principles of peaceful co-existence that underpinned Nehru's foreign policy.
- 9 The institutional structure has survived the end of the Congress System, entry of opposition parties to governance, the Emergency, and the entry of Hindu nationalism into the governmental arena.
- 10 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), p. 247; pp. 255–58.
- 11 See James Manor, "The Presidency" in Kapur and Mehta (2005), pp. 105–127.
- 12 See Enskat et al. (2001).
- 13 See Schoettli (2011), chapter four for the relationship of Nehru with his contemporaries and the dynamics of intra-party competition in Indian National Congress. This created a competitive political atmosphere and helped the culture of political competition to settle down. This period of transition helped move one-party-dominance eventually in the direction of a competitive democracy rather than getting ossified into authoritarian rule as in many transitional democracies.
- 14 The dynastic 'theory' of succession in India, popularized in the West by Ali (1985), has been questioned in Mitra (1988a). That said, the fact that the Indian National Congress is still firmly in thrall to the Nehru legacy as seen in its continued adherence to the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi, the heir apparent, who is quite likely to succeed her as Congress President, shows the power of dynastic politics in India. The Congress party is not an exception. One can see this in many other parties as well.
- 15 The legal basis of the Emergency rule of 1975–76 has been the subject of an intense controversy. Most observers consider this period as a breakdown in the democratic political system in India. See Morris-Jones (1977).
- 16 President's Rule, under which a region is ruled directly by the centre for a specific period, is indicative of a failure of representative government. It happened relatively infrequently during the first two decades of Independence, the most celebrated case being the dismissal of the elected communist government of Kerala in 1959. It became more common during the governmental instability of the mid-1960s, bringing the total incidences of the imposition of President's Rule to eight during the prime ministerial tenure of Nehru and Shastri, from

- 1950 to 1966. However, during the two periods of tenure of Mrs Gandhi, President's Rule was imposed 42 times.
- 17 If the President of India is satisfied that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of the nation or of any part of the territory thereof is threatened, whether by war or external aggression, or internal disturbance, he may, by proclamation, make a declaration to that effect (Article 352). While a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation, nothing in Article 19 'shall restrict the power of the state to make any law or to take any executive action' (Article 358). Article 356 makes similar provisions for the suspension of democratic government in a region. Emergencies are conceived of as temporary measures and the scope for executive and legislative accountability is not altogether absent.
- 18 See James Manor, *Nehru to Nineties: The Changing Office of the Prime Minister* (London: Hurst, 1994) for an excellent analysis of the evolution of this crucial component of India's institutional arrangement.
- 19 This has already happened on several occasions. In 1998, the NDA government led by Prime Minister Vajpayee fell when a no-confidence motion came up for discussion in the parliament. More recently, the UPA government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh escaped a similar fate. The government survived the 'trust vote' when a section of the opposition voted for it, making up for the votes of the communist members who withdrew their support on account of their opposition to the Indo-US nuclear deal, championed by the UPA government.
- 20 James Manor, who had earlier talked about the 'deinstitutionalization' of India, has more recently talked about the 'regeneration' of institutions. See Manor (1994).
- 21 Shastri's slogan—*Jai jawan, jai kisan* ('victory to the soldier, victory to the peasant')—galvanized the nation. His brilliant career ended abruptly by death from heart attack—in Taskent, USSR—just after the signing of the peace treaty with Pakistan.
- 22 Andy Morino's *Narendra Modi: A Political Biography* (Delhi: HarperCollins, 2014) was one of the first attempts at sketching the life and political career of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Because of the combative style of politics that Modi introduced, accounts of his life and work tend to be polarized. For a balanced account, refer to Ravi Veloor (2016).
- 23 See Vernon Hewitt and Shirin Rai, "Parliament" in Jayal and Mehta (2010), pp. 28–42 and Arun Agrawal, "The Indian Parliament" in Kapur and Mehta (2005), pp. 77–104.
- 24 The independence and institutional cohesion of the Lok Sabha was sorely tested in 2008 when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, tired of the attempts of the Left Front members of the parliament who were then supporting the UPA government from outside, to control his room to manoeuvre regarding the Indo-US framework agreement, demanded a trust vote from the parliament. In the actual vote, a politically surcharged event, there were accusations of misconduct on the part of some members. However, for the bulk of legislators, party discipline and probity prevailed, and the government of Manmohan Singh survived the trust vote.
- 25 For details, refer to 'The legislative process: how laws are made' in Kashyap (1989), pp. 121–56.
- 26 For a brief period during the last years of the presidency of Zail Singh, the presidential assent became an effective instrument to delay legislation. But commentators on Indian politics have attributed this more to the personal pique of Singh against Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi than to any explicit policy difference between them.
- 27 Such situations are not unknown in parliamentary democracies. But the French solution of 'cohabitation' of a President and a legislative majority belonging to different parties or the German 'grand coalition' is not yet available, though they cannot be excluded in the future.
- 28 See Mitra (1978 and 1980) for an analysis of the rapid rise and fall of governments in Indian States during the 1960s.
- 29 For an excellent analysis of the mediating role of India's judiciary see Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "India's Judiciary: The Promise of Uncertainty", in Kapur and Mehta (2005), 158–193, and Lavanya Rajamani and Arghya Sengupta, "The Supreme Court" in Jayal and Mehta, (2010), pp. 80–97.
- 30 Thanks to this landmark judgement and the logic of coalition politics, the requisite majority to amend the constitution has become much more difficult to attain. Correspondingly, the relative power of the Supreme Court as the guardian of the constitution has grown.
- 31 Mehta (2006, p. 167) presents judicial activism as an invigorating act of political balancing.

- 32 The Indian Supreme Court passed a judgment in 1995 which is popularly known as the Hindutva judgment in which the court ruled that seeking vote in the name of Hinduism is not a ‘corrupt practice’. The court has decided to constitute a larger bench to re-evaluate its judgement. “The Hindutva judgment” was delivered by Justice J.S. Verma on behalf of himself and Justices N.P. Singh and K. Venkataswami on December 11, 1995. The judgment upheld the references to religion as part of an electoral campaign provided this was a reference to culture, not done with the intention to promote hatred or violence. It set aside a previous judgement by the Bombay High Court which had set aside the elections of some candidates mainly because they had committed a corrupt practice as defined by Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The corrupt practice defined in Section 123(3) consists of “the appeal by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent to vote or refrain from voting for any person on the ground of his religion.” See www.livelaw.in/supreme-court-review-hindutva-judgment-eighteen-years/ visited on May 22, 2016.
- 33 The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews during May to June 1996, in the aftermath of the eleventh parliamentary elections. A representative sample of about 10,000 adults was interviewed under the guidance of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi.
- 34 Verma and Kusum (2000) narrate this success story.
- 35 See K.P. Krishnan and T. V. Somanathan, “Civil Service: An Institutional Perspective”, in Kapur and Mehta (2005), pp. 258–319.
- 36 See Baldev Raj Nayar “Social Stability in India under Globalization and Liberalization”, *India Review*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2007), 133–164, for a review of the role of public commissions.
- 37 See Ravi Veloor, *India Rising* (2016) for an analysis of the effectiveness of the regulatory mechanism in his reference to Vinod Rai’s record in office as Comptroller and Auditor General.
- 38 For an analysis of the administrative and political consequence of the lack of coordination between the State government and the Union Home Ministry in the case of the destruction of the Babri Mosque by a fanatic mob despite the presence of police and paramilitary forces, see Madhav Godbole, *Unfinished Innings: Recollections of a Civil Servant*, (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1996), pp. 332–446.
- 39 See Steven Wilkinson, *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy since Independence* (Harvard University Press, 2015).
- 40 The percentage of women representatives in India’s highest legislature is low in terms of absolute numbers but does not compare too unfavourably to those in developed European democracies. Only 6 percent of the House of Commons of Britain in the mid-nineties were women. ‘United Nations Economic Commission for Europe’, *The Economist*, 18–24 March 1995, p. 33.
- 41 India’s constitution—the world’s longest, with 397 articles and 12 schedules—was formulated by 299 men and women, indirectly elected under limited franchise but still representing a wide range of political opinions in India, after about three years of deliberation, and was formally adopted on 26 November 1949. Basu (1985), pp. 18–19.

5 The federal structure

Balancing national unity and regional diversity

India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.

Article 1, The Constitution of India.

Personally, I do not attach any importance to the label which may be attached to it—whether you call it a Federal Constitution or a Unitary Constitution or by any other name. It makes no difference so long as the Constitution serves our purpose.

Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly,
in Constituent Assembly Debate V, cited in Austin (1966), p. 186

No other large and important national government, I believe, is so dependent as India on theoretically subordinate, but actually, rather distinct units responsible to a different political control, for so much of the administration of what are recognized as national programmes of great importance to the nation.

Appleby (1957), p. 22

Introduction

An analysis of the structure, function and process of federalism in India is the main theme of this chapter. India has a federal design of an unusual kind. It combines the classic features of a federal government, with some unique characteristics born out of the Indian context. Its solicitude to balance local and regional interests on the one hand and national interests on the other has drawn the attention of specialists of federal theory.¹ In designing this institution and adapting it to Indian conditions, India's leaders have shown great flexibility and pragmatism.² The result has been a federal system that has evolved greatly, beyond the original design. Despite conspicuous cases of violent opposition to the central Indian state among parts of the population in Jammu and Kashmir and in India's North-East, it has acquired a high level of acceptance across the country.

Ethno-national movements, focused on a region, drawing on an ethnic identity leavened by memories of exclusion by the central power and resentment based on class, have led to the unravelling of many post-colonial and post-communist states of Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. In South Asia itself, these sentiments of region-based antipathy played a key role in the breaking up of Pakistan and the long drawn civil war in Sri Lanka. However, in India, with the exception of Jammu and Kashmir where secessionism has continued to simmer practically since Independence, most ethno-national movements have found an orderly resolution within the structure of India's flexible federal system.

In fact, the politics of federalism—creating new States, sub-States or adding special provisions for the protection of regional identity and economic interests—has emerged as a valuable coping mechanism for the central government when negotiating with secessionist movements. Typically, such movements start with a few highly-motivated leaders propagating ‘the cause’ with great intensity but eventually, a combination of force and persuasion by the state leads to the creation of a new unit where the rebels—turned stakeholders—can rule (Diagram 5.1). India’s constitution, prescient in this particular respect, has conceptualised a valuable political resource for state formation and legitimacy. The flexible mechanism of Indian federalism thus becomes a major resource for state-formation in India.

The federal structure

Political unrest in Jammu and Kashmir, separatist movements in Punjab and in the North East in the 1980s and the occasional outbreak of inter-community violence have been the cause of anxiety about India’s national unity. The fear of ‘Balkanization’ greatly concerned India’s leaders who lived through the bloody Partition of the country at Independence. Subsequently, demands for States’ rights were reminiscent of the demand by the Muslim League prior to Independence, as the thin end of the wedge that could eventually lead to the dismemberment of India. The consequence has been a federal design, and practice, that combine serious attempts to pay attention to States’ interests, firm opposition to secessionist movements and attempts to reconcile regional and national interests within the framework of the Indian state. Owing to the successful accommodation of separatist demands, which has seen the number of federal States rise to 29 (see Table 5.1), such movements are generally seen as a democratic articulation of legitimate interests.

As one can see in Diagram 5.1, many demands for secession from the Indian state—or the demand for a homeland within the Indian state—begin as very high-intensity movements, led by a handful of activists. The central government reacts with a double strategy of accommodation and repression, just as the secessionist movements promote their cause with a combination of protest and participation. Typically, such movements go through a transformation as they gain in strength. The average intensity of the movement comes down as numbers grow, and the leadership seeks to exercise its authority over the followers. As the transformation of Assam into seven different States, or creation of new entities such as Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Telangana shows, such movements eventually lead to the creation of new federal States where the leaders of the separatist movement become the new rulers. These post-Independence movements have a pre-Independence origin. The call for a federal division of powers, advocated by the Indian National Congress in the 1920s when it organised its provincial committees on the basis of linguistically contiguous areas, originated from the need to safeguard regional and sectional identity. But economic policy, especially in a country with formidable problems of development, required central coordination. Out of these contradictory needs has emerged the need for ‘cooperative’ federalism—a form of power-sharing in which national, State and local governments interact cooperatively and collectively to solve common problems rather than acting in an adversarial mode.

In addition, there are sub-states, district councils, and special districts with different levels of autonomy protecting them from outside interference (Table 5.2). The consequent structural complexity must create nightmarish scenarios of the whole system collapsing rather like the Soviet Union. Why has this not happened?

Table 5.1 India's evolving federalism

Serial No.	Name of the State	Created in	Area	Principal languages	Population
1	Andhra Pradesh (after the split in 2014)	1956	276,754 km ²	Telegu, Urdu, Hindi	76,210,007 52,500,000
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1987	83,743 km ²	Nissi/Daffla, Nepali, Bengali	1,097,968
3	Assam	1947	78,438 km ²	Assamese, Bengali, Bodo/Boro	26,655,528
4	Bihar	1912	94,163 km ²	Hindi, Urdu, Santhali	82,998,509
5	Chhattisgarh	2000	135,191 km ²	Hindi	20,833,803
6	Goa	1987	3,702 km ²	Konkani, Marathi, Kannada	1,347,668
7	Gujarat	1960	196,024 km ²	Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi	50,671,017
8	Haryana	1966	44,212 km ²	Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu	21,144,564
9	Himachal Pradesh	1971	55,673 km ²	Hindi, Punjabi, Kinnauri	6,077,900
10	Jammu and Kashmir	1947	222,236 km ²	Urdu, Kashmiri, Dogri	10,069,917
11	Jharkhand	2000	79,714 km ²	Santhali, Hindi, Urdu	26,945,829
12	Karnataka	1956	191,791 km ²	Kannada, Urdu, Telugu	52,850,562
13	Kerala	1956	38,863 km ²	Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada	31,841,374
14	Madhya Pradesh	1956	308,000 km ²	Hindi, Bhili/Bhilodi, Gondi	60,348,023
15	Maharashtra	1960	307,713 km ²	Marathi, Hindi, Urdu	96,878,627
16	Manipur	1972	22,327 km ²	Manipuri, Thado, Tangkhul	2,166,788
17	Meghalaya	1972	22,429 km ²	Khasi, Garo, Bengali, Assamese	2,318,822
18	Mizoram	1987	21,087 km ²	Lushai/Mizo, Bengali, Lakher	888,573
19	Nagaland	1963	16,579 km ²	Ao, Sema, Konyak	1,990,036
20	Orissa (Odisha)	1949	155,707 km ²	Oriya (Odia), Hindi, Telugu	36,804,660
21	Punjab	1956	50,362 km ²	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu	24,358,999
22	Rajasthan	1956	342,239 km ²	Hindi, Bhili/Bhilodi, Urdu	56,507,188
23	Sikkim	1975	7,096 km ²	Nepali, Bhutia, Lepcha	540,851
24	Tamil Nadu	1956	130,058 km ²	Tamil, Telugu, Kannada	62,405,679
25	Telangana	2014	11,4840 km ²	Telugu, Urdu	35,193,978
26	Tripura	1972	10,491.69 km ²	Bengali, Tripuri, Hindi	3,199,203
27	Uttarakhand	2000	53,483 km ²	Hindi, Garhwali, Kumaoni	8,489,349
28	Uttar Pradesh	1947	236,286 km ²	Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi	166,197,921
29	West Bengal	1956	88,752 km ²	Bengali, Hindi, Urdu	80,176,197

Source: *The Penguin Guide to the States and Union Territories of India* (2007) New Delhi: Penguin; "Population of Andhra Pradesh 2017". *Indiapopulation2017.in*. N.p., 2017. Web. 19 May 2017.

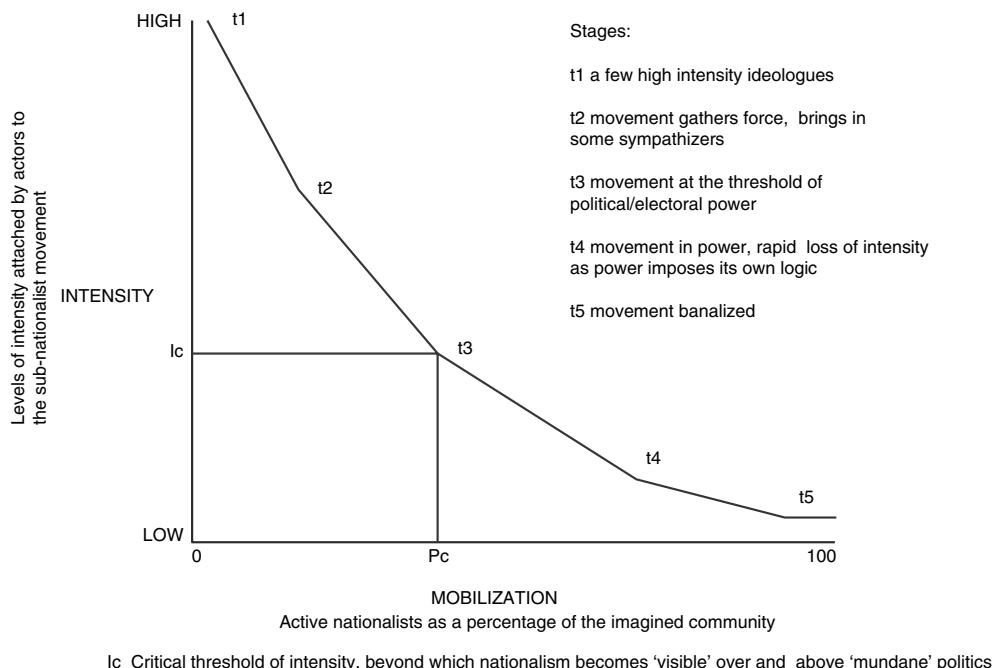


Diagram 5.1 Sub-national movements.

Source: Mitra and Lewis (eds.) (1996), p. 27.

Table 5.2 Union territories: India's unconventional federal units

Serial No.	Union territory	Created in	Area	Principal languages	Population
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1956	8,249 km ²	Bengali, Tamil, Hindi	356,152
2	Chandigarh	1953	114 km ²	Hindi, Punjab, Tamil	900,635
3	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1961	491 km ²	Gujarati, Hindi, Konkani	220,490
4	Daman and Diu	1987	112 km ²	Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi	158,204
5	Delhi*	1956	1,483 km ²	Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu	13,850,507
6	Lakshadweep	1956	32 km ²	Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi	60,650
7	Puducherry	1963	492 km ²	Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu	974,345

* National Capital Territory.

Source: The Penguin Guide to the States and Union Territories of India (2007) New Delhi: Penguin.

Sub-national movements and federalization: a coping mechanism

Numerous special features of the Indian constitution give it its highly centralized form. Of these, the two most important are the nature of the division of powers between the central government and the States with a bias in favour of the centre, and the financial provisions affecting the distribution of revenues. In India, unlike in the United States of America, the federal States, except for Jammu and Kashmir, do not have their own separate constitutions. Elections, the creation of new States, central financial aid and

the use of the army to rein in the more extreme wings of separatists have contained such movements within the Indian Union. However, as one can see from continued insurgency in Kashmir, the uneasy peace in Punjab and the appearance of new splinter groups of secessionists in the North-East, sub-nationalism, spilling over to outright revolt against the state, is not entirely off the agenda.³

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is an exception because the Instrument of Accession—on the basis of which Kashmir joined the Indian Union—ordained that the central government would not interfere in the internal affairs of the State. Article 370, therefore, provides for a separate constitution for Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir has emerged as a test case of the integrative ability of the Indian political system. During British colonial rule, Kashmir was one of about 600 princely states, ruled by Indian princes under British suzerainty. As a part of the general arrangements for the Transfer of Power, Britain agreed to partition the territories under direct rule into the sovereign states of India and Pakistan, and to transfer the right to decide for themselves—‘paramountcy’—to the Indian princes, who were then free to join either of the two successor states or to remain independent. Unlike most princely rulers who chose to join India or Pakistan, the King of Kashmir hesitated, because the King was Hindu, while most his subjects were Muslims. Within about a year of Independence, however, when Pathan tribesmen, aided by Pakistan, invaded Kashmir, the King signed the Instrument of Accession to join India. India promptly airlifted troops to halt the invasion at the Line of Control (LoC) which became, thereafter, the unofficial frontier between Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and the area under Indian control. As the State of Jammu and Kashmir has been accorded a special status under Article 370 of the Indian constitution, it possesses more autonomy than other units of the federation. However, in practice, many of these special rights have been whittled down, bringing the State almost to the same level of control from the centre as the federal States of the Indian Union.

The constitution of India, in the tradition of written agreements between the central government and the States, defines the division of powers between both sides in its 7th schedule. The fact remains, however, that in contrast to the case of the United States, the Indian federation is not the outcome of pre-existing units that came together in a federal union out of common interest. Instead, the Union is the result of the provinces of British India at Independence and their subsequent reorganization in 1957. The process of federalization continues, with the addition of new federal units, emerging in response to specific demands.

The Union List gives the centre exclusive authority to act on matters of national importance; this list includes 97 items of defence, foreign affairs, currency, banking, and income tax. Table 5.3 lists the most important of the powers. The State List, which allocates exclusive rights of legislation to the States, includes 66 items that cover issues of local and regional importance such as public order and police, welfare, health, education, local government, industry, agriculture and land revenue. The Concurrent List, a special feature of Indian federalism, contains 47 items over which the centre and the States share legislative competence. In case of a conflict, the central law prevails. Civil and criminal law and social and economic planning are the important items in this list as these subjects are crucial to issues of identity and economic development. The residual power lies with the Union.

Unlike the classic model of federalism, in India the central government, acting through the parliament, can create new States, alter the boundaries or names of existing ones, and even abolish a State by ordinary legislative procedure. Not only does the central government have a wide range of powers under the Union List, but these powers are also enhanced because the central government is vested with a variety of powers

Table 5.3 The federal distribution of powers

<i>Lists (selected items)</i>	<i>Competence</i>	<i>Limits</i>
List I—Union List (97 items) Defence of India—naval, military and air forces ★ Atomic energy ★ Central Bureau of Intelligence ★ Foreign affairs—treaties—war and peace ★ Citizenship ★ Pilgrimages to places outside India ★ Railways—national Highways—Ports—Airways ★ Posts and telegraphs ★ Public debt of the Union— Currency, Foreign loans, Reserve Bank of India, Post Office Trade and commerce with foreign countries ★ Inter-State trade and commerce ★ weight and measure ★ Industries—petroleum ★ inter-State rivers—fisheries beyond territorial waters ★ Industrial disputes concerning Union employees ★ the National Library, the Indian Museum, Benares Hindu University, the Aligarh Muslim University and the Delhi University—the training of police officers ★ Ancient and historical monuments and records—archaeological sites and remains ★ Census ★ All-India Services—Union Public Service Commission ★ the Election Commission ★ Audit of the accounts of the Union and of the States ★ Supreme Court— High Courts ★ Taxes on income other than agricultural income— Corporation tax ★ Any other matter not enumerated in List II or List III including an tax not mentioned in either of those Lists.	Centre	None
List II—State List (66 items) Public order—Police—Prisons ★ Local government ★ Public health and sanitation ★ Pilgrimages ★ intoxicating liquors ★ Agriculture ★ Water ★ Land ★ Money-lending ★ Theatres—cinemas ★ State public services ★ Taxes on agricultural income, professions, luxuries, entertainments.	State government	1. Presidential assent 2. Parliament can transfer jurisdiction temporarily
List III—Concurrent List (47 items) Preventive detention ★ Marriage and divorce ★ Contracts ★ Bankruptcy ★ Trust and Trustees ★ Vagrancy— nomadic tribes ★ Forces ★ Economic and social planning ★ Population and family planning Trade unions ★ Social security and social insurance ★ Education ★ Relief and rehabilitator. ★ Price control ★ Electricity ★ Evacuee property.	Both	Central laws prevail in case of conflict

Source: *The Constitution of India*.

that enable it, under certain circumstances, to extend its authority to the domain of the States. These special powers take three forms: (1) the Emergency powers under Articles 352, 356 and 360; (2) the use of Union Executive powers under Articles 256, 257 and 360; and (3) special legislative powers granted under Article 249.

The Emergency powers in the Indian constitution can enable the Union Executive to transform the federation into a unitary state when the President makes a declaration to that effect. Under these Emergency provisions the central executive and legislature can simply substitute the corresponding organs of the regional governments. Even under non-Emergency conditions, the central government may assume executive powers over regional governments in the ‘national’ interest. These powers, used by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, are closely monitored by the parliament, the media and the judiciary. In this context, the Rajya Sabha acts as the custodian of the States’ interests.

The central government’s capacity to influence the federal division of powers is augmented by the constitution’s financial provisions. The central government has vast powers over the collection and distribution of revenue, which make the States heavily dependent on the central government for financial support. Financial assistance can be extended by the central government to States in several ways. But the central government does not have an entirely free hand in the matter. There are constitutional mechanisms that put a lid on the possible partisan use of central assistance to State governments which, in principle, can have competing political parties at the helm. Most of the lucrative taxes like income tax, corporate tax, and import and export duties are collected by the central government. These funds are shared by the centre with the States under a formula devised by the Finance Commission, which is appointed by the President but guaranteed independence from interference by the centre as well as the States in its everyday functions. The centre alone has the power over currency, banking and international borrowings. The States also have their own sources of income, but these taxes, like land revenue or irrigation taxes, for example, have not been particularly lucrative. Agricultural income is notoriously difficult to ascertain and, for political reasons, taxation is difficult to enforce.

Because of the financial provisions envisaged in the constitution and their evolution over the years since Independence, the States have been routinely short of funds. These shortfalls have been met through central assistance in the form of loans, grants-in-aid, and overdraft facilities—provisions that have compromised the autonomy of the States. This was further reinforced by the centralizing tendencies of the national Five Year Plans and the powers exercised by the Congress party on State governments, ruling both at the centre and in the States for two decades without interruption following Independence and thereafter, intermittently. With the end of the hegemony of the Congress party, however, a new mutation took place in the federal arrangement, moving it towards a cooperative federation, away from the centre-dominated quasi-federation that it was to begin with.

India’s cooperative federalism

The centralizing tendencies of the early, post-Independence decades and the contestation of central power by opposition parties once they assumed office in the States from the late 1960s have merged over the years into a distinct pattern of cooperation between the centre and the States. This federal tradition has been shaped by a number of centripetal

tendencies, thanks to the financial power of the central government and centrifugal forces at the heart of the Indian political system, such as the rise of language movements in the 1950s and the assertion of ethnic identity in the last two decades. Freed from the tutelage of central dominance because of the decline of the ‘one-dominant-party system’ of the Congress party, and liberalization of the economy since 1991, Indian federalism has become more robust in recent years. Regional political parties and their leaders have now become key components of both the ruling and opposition coalitions at the centre. Through an adroit use of their room to manoeuvre, regional parties have now acquired great prominence and leverage in national politics. This has changed the nature of Indian federalism.

The adoption of regional languages as administrative languages after the redrawing of regional boundaries, following the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, has brought government closer to the people.⁴ Regional languages have experienced a renaissance of sorts, spurred on by the textbook market, public funds for regional culture, cinema and TV, the National Sahitya Academy (the National Academy of Literature, which promotes the national language Hindi as well as the regional languages), and the national film festivals, which offer special prizes for the best regional films. The regional elite, confident in their language and identity, have also rediscovered the virtues of learning English and Hindi, which give access to competitive jobs under the central government, to prestigious national universities, and to business and industry in other regions of India and abroad. The process of national integration through the spread of link languages like English and Hindi has gone hand in hand with the assertion of regional identity. Thus, the issue of language conflict, which split East Pakistan from West Pakistan and continues to threaten the integrity of Sri Lanka, has been largely contained in India.

The institutions that we have examined above show how the Indian political system has attempted to combine elements of a modern state with the historical legacies of the pre-modern past. The constitution includes countervailing forces—a wide spectrum of institutions with a sense of corporate identity, political power, agenda and political base—that would make it difficult, though not impossible, for a potential dictator to transform the political system into an authoritarian regime. In the process, the state—despite the liberalisation of the economy and decentralisation of much social and economic policy making—has remained the initiator of change, and the key player in nation-building.

We will see below how the political process has helped produce a continuous interaction between the values of individualism, liberty, egalitarianism and secularism on which the system is based, and the hierarchical and organic norms of the society, within which it is ensconced. The system has sometimes been stretched to the limit but without breaking down altogether. It has managed to bounce back in a transformed shape and with renewed vigour.

India’s federal structure has gained considerable breadth and depth during the decades since Independence. The uneasy assortment of provinces directly ruled by the colonial government and native princely states whose rulers chose to join India has become a robust federal Union with 29 States and seven Union territories. The provinces, particularly since their reorganization on the basis of mother tongue, have become cohesive cultural and political units, effectively cooperating through a broad spectrum of federal bodies.⁵ These institutional changes are underpinned by growing popular trust in federal institutions. These achievements highlight an important puzzle.

While there is no denying the growing depth and complexity of India's federal institutions, what remains unclear is why India's federalism—given that it is a 'modern' institution of exogenous provenance thrust upon a traditional society—should work at all. If the problems of governance in transitional societies arise from the hiatus between modern institutions and traditional society, then federalism—itself a modern institution based on a written constitution, States' rights, and judicial mediation in case of conflict of interests'—should have been undermined by political practice based on ethnic loyalties, rather like it has been in neighbouring Pakistan. Despite having come to the brink of collapse time and again, India's federal structure has pulled back to continue as before. Where does this resilience of the federal idea come from?

The fortuitous combination of structure and agency best explains the coping mechanism that leads to the relative success of federalism in India. India's political geography, simultaneously marked by regional diversity and cross-regional cultural links and social networks, provides the countervailing pressures of regional autonomy and interregional bonds that are essential for a robust federal system. Both tendencies have been reinforced in the Indian case by the political process that characterized British colonial rule and Indian resistance to it. Masters of indirect rule through intermediaries, the British utilized a system of governance that required the transfer of some degree of autonomy to regional and local units—under the watchful eyes of the central government—to provide some substance to their legal identities while simultaneously binding them together within the 'steel frame' of colonial rule.

The colonial tactic of 'divide and rule' found its match in the resolve of the leaders of the freedom movement to unite and oppose—a strategy that combined institutional participation with rational protest. In retrospect, thanks to the insuperable political and administrative skills of leaders like Mohandas K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and many others, the anti-colonial movement also evolved into a government-in-waiting. The second historical moment came after Independence. When the Muslim League, the main balancing factor against the hegemonic ambitions of the Indian National Congress left India for Pakistan, the void was quickly filled by a succession of strong regional leaders who kept the expanding power of the central leaders in check.

This can be studied in terms of some empirical arguments, involving the political culture, institutional design, context, and policy process of federalism in India.⁶ The success of a federal system is contingent on the perceived interest of federating units to stay within a federation rather than to strike out on their own. These arguments, discussed in detail below, suggest that the preponderant role of the Union in India's federal design responded to the need for unity in the wake of Independence and creation of the institutional means for transfer of resources from the rich to the poor, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of the new postcolonial state. This was reinforced by the countervailing tendencies of Indian politics that gave federal institutions the necessary room to manoeuvre. This became a successful track record to draw upon once the informal coordinating mechanism of the Congress party when it ruled all the States of India. Following the liberalization of India's economy in 1991, interstate competition transformed the States from 'clients' into competing stakeholders⁷ which have since discovered a new *raison d'être* for federalism in the vast, rapidly expanding Indian market with its global reach.

What should propel rational actors towards federal institutions rather than away from them? Institutions, we learn from North (1991: 3), are 'humanly devised constraints

that shape human interaction'. They achieve legitimacy and strength by 'reducing uncertainty' and 'providing a structure to everyday life'. In a quickly changing political situation of the kind that one can expect in transitional societies, institutional durability depends on whether the institutions can provide a bridge between the indigenous political tradition and exogenous political designs through which the state attempts to shape them. The provision of incentives—material, symbolic and punitive—to abide by the federal rules of the game is of crucial significance. Crafty political leaders and their equally disingenuous followers can be constrained by rules only when they perceive compliance to be in their best interests. North puts it succinctly. The resultant path of institutional change is shaped by (1) the 'lock-in' that comes from the symbiotic relationship between institutions and the organizations that have evolved as a consequence of the incentive structure provided by those institutions and (2) the feedback process by which human beings perceive and react to changes in the opportunity set.⁸ This might help us understand the strength, resilience, and effectiveness of India's federalism in terms of the culture, design, context and policy processes that underpin it.

Institutional changes since Independence

The framers of the Indian constitution were keen on federalism as a functional instrument for the creation of an Indian nation and a strong, cohesive state. The leading politicians of the immediate post-Independence state were faced with internal and external threats to India's security and confronted the challenge of development through centralized economic planning. Thus, for both constitutional and political reasons, the institutionalization of federalism in the Indian system appears to have been seriously compromised from the outset. In fact, the apprehensions of 'fissiparous tendencies' and 'Balkanization' among the informed observers were so great that the professional predictions for the future of India as a democracy and a federation were pretty grim. Nonetheless, the political process has been able to adapt to this design and in many—though not all—cases, to modify it when necessary, to safeguard regional interests.

The first phase of federation lasted from the time of Indian Independence to the mid-1960s. Nehru took democracy seriously enough to face the enormously expanded Indian electorate in the first General Election in 1951. The electorate significantly included the Hindu nationalists, one of whose members had assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, and the communists, who had just staged an armed revolution in Telangana in South India. Nehru took the chief ministers seriously enough to write to each of them every month, in an effort to keep them informed and to solicit their opinion in an effort to build a national consensus.⁹ The INC, which had already embraced federalism by organizing itself into Provincial Congress Committees based on the linguistic regions, institutionalized the principles of consultation, accommodation, and consensus through a delicate balancing of the factions within the 'Congress system'.¹⁰ It also co-opted local and regional leaders in the national power structure and sent out Congress 'observers' from the centre to mediate between warring factions in the provinces. Thus simultaneously ensuring the legitimacy of the provincial power structure in running its own affairs and the role of central mediation.

The second phase of Indian federalism began with the fourth General Elections in 1967, which drastically reduced the Congress party's overwhelming parliamentary strength to a simple majority and saw half of the States moving from Congress control into the hands of opposition parties or coalitions, causing a radical change in the nature

of centre-State relations. No longer could an imperious Congress Prime Minister benevolently ‘dictate’ to a loyal Congress chief minister. Even as the tone became more contentious, however, the essential principles of accommodation and consultation held during the crucial period of transition from 1967 to 1969. The Congress-dominated centre started cohabiting with opposition parties at the regional level. The tenuous balance was lost once the Congress party split in 1969 and Indira Gandhi, her party reduced to a minority in parliament, adopted a strategy of radical rhetoric and authoritarian leadership. In consequence, the regional accommodation, which had been possible through the internal federalization of the Congress party, eroded. After the authoritarian interlude of 1975–77 (which in both law and fact reduced India’s federal system to a unitary state), the system reverted to the earlier stage of tenuous cooperation between the centre and the States.

The third phase in the federalization of Indian politics began at the end of the 1980s. Regional parties, like the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) of Bihar, have asserted their interests more openly over the past one-and-a-half decades of coalition and minority governments. Even the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which led the ruling coalition in the thirteenth Lok Sabha until 2004 has had to be solicitous in its, at least symbolic adherence to the norms of centre-State relations established by its predecessors. As a matter of fact, the three newest States were created during the tenure of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition, with the BJP as its leading member. The acceptance of the federal principle by Hindu nationalists was already evident in their acceptance of the three-language formula in spite of the advocacy of Hindi as India’s national language during the long years in opposition.

The fourth and the most recent phase of federalism started with the ‘big bang liberalization’ of the Indian economy. It has seen a radical transformation from the earlier ‘ganging up of the States against the centre’ to a free-for-all competition between all stakeholders—Union, States and mega-cities—to create conditions that attract investments from home and abroad. This has led to the decline of the centre-dominated developmental model that was implemented after Independence. By scaling back the State’s involvement in the developmental process and as such reducing the functions of the central government, liberalization removed the safety net on which regional governments had depended. Consequently, the process of liberalization risked opposition from State governments. This opposition failed to materialize. Rob Jenkins even argues that part of the momentum for further liberalization comes from India’s regions.¹¹

The policies of liberalization launched in 1991 that started to dismantle the draconian rules of the command economy, required a new regime to provide coordination in a rapidly changing financial environment.¹² The removal of subsidies and handouts held the potential to generate an anti-reform coalition of leftist parties. Why did this anti-reform wave, in spite of the rhetoric from its leaders, fail to block reform? Jenkins’s analysis of the liberalization of coffee pricing makes the point.¹³ Thus, centre-State conflicts have been at least partially displaced by *interstate* competition for investment from home and foreign capital markets. Lawrence Saez draws attention to changes in institutional arrangements and the process of political coordination of the economy: ‘the most significant transformation of India’s federal system is exemplified by the gradual shift from inter-governmental cooperation between the central government and the States towards inter-jurisdictional competition among the States’.¹⁴

Measuring federalism's success

A detailed analysis of the functioning of India's federal institutions is beyond the scope of this book.¹⁵ These include designated institutions such as the upper house (Rajya Sabha), which represents States' interests at the Union level, as well as more specialized ones like the Finance Commission, an independent body appointed by the President to maintain a fair and efficient division of revenues between the centre and the States, and the Planning Commission and Election Commission, whose responsibilities indirectly affect the vitality of federal processes. One indication of the extent to which the economies of the States are affected by federal institutions is the provisions for sharing the national income. From 1998 to 2002, all the States together raised only 49.2 percent of their current spending from their own taxes. The rest was raised through a variety of mechanisms such as tax devolution, grants (both plan and non-plan), and special loans from the Reserve Bank of India. These transfers were made on the basis of complex criteria that took into account distributive justice (the extent of poverty or special circumstances such as natural disasters, terrorism and population size) while rewarding evidence of efforts at self-help. In the event, high-income States covered 66.8 percent of their current spending with their own resources, middle-income States covered 55 percent, and low-income States covered 38.8 percent.¹⁶

The findings from survey research show that enough profits from macro-financial transactions have trickled down to the level of the mass public to bring the federal process a measure of legitimacy. A series of National Election Studies measured the interest of the Indian electorate in the political system at the central, regional and local levels, as well as loyalty to the respective political arenas (see Tables 5.4 and 5.5).

Table 5.4 Interest in central and State government (in percent)

Question: Are you more concerned/interested about/in what the government in Delhi does or about what the (name the State government) does?

	1971	1996	1999
Neither	24.9	39.7	26.0
Central government	21.0	11.0	14.8
Both	14.5	20.9	26.7
State government	18.9	23.0	25.6
D.K., N.A., Other	20.7	5.4	6.9

Data Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1971, 1996, 1999.

Table 5.5 Loyalty to region first and then to India (in percent)

'We should be loyal to our own region first and then to India.' Do you...?.

	1967	1996	1999	2004
Agree	67.1	53.4	50.7	65.4
Disagree	22.3	21.0	21.4	19.8
D.K./No Opinion	8.4	25.6	27.8	14.8

Data Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1967, 1996, 1999 and 2004.

A differently worded question asked in 2009 which sought to measure the relative salience of region compared to the nation:

While voting, some people give more importance to the work done by the state government, while others give more importance to the work done by the central government in Delhi. While voting in this election, what mattered to you the most?

shows an even greater salience attached to the regional government. People pointing out the salience of the State government numbered 31 percent compared to 21 percent who felt that the central government in Delhi mattered more. Those who thought both to be equally important were, at 21 percent, running a close parallel to this. Those who did not think either the central government or the regional government to be of much consequence numbered 7 percent whereas those who pronounced no opinion at all were a hefty 20 percent.

Analysis of these findings reveals a growing interest in regional matters from 1971 to 1999 (see Table 5.4). A notable and steady increase can be seen in the group of respondents who are equally interested in both levels of government. This table shows more and more people taking an interest in what their own region does while the focus on the centre has somewhat declined. The most remarkable increase has been in the public's interest in *both* central and regional government, accompanied by a stark decline in the percentage of those without an opinion. This can be interpreted as evidence of the internalization of the federal norm in that section of the electorate which appears to see the power-sharing arrangement as a part of normal centre-State relations.

One could infer from the results presented in Table 5.5 that loyalty first and foremost to the regions is in steady decline. Tables 5.4 and 5.5 show that both arenas are increasingly perceived as legitimate venues of political action, and, they need not be mutually exclusive. Regional political forces, having established themselves in the States as well as at the central level, have turned the issue of the relationship between national and regional identities from one of exclusive choice into one of inclusiveness. This has been accelerated through India's vigorous media and thriving telecommunications market.

Finally, the horizontal and vertical expansion of federal processes through the creation of new federal units that strategically co-opt regional and local dissidents and produce new stakeholders through the women's quota in the local *panchayats* (village councils) has brought greater legitimacy to the Indian state and cohesion to the Indian nation.

Panchayati Raj System

The Panchayati Raj System (PRS), an example of the vertical expansion of India's federalism, is widely recognised as the backbone of India's rural development. Its institutions fulfil administrative purposes as well as furthering participative political development and socio-economic advancement. The PRS was given a unified form and constitutional rank through the 73rd amendment in 1992, with its subsequent implantation from 1993 onwards. Panchayats existed in various forms since 1950 under the provisions of Part IX of the constitution of India. The name *Panchayat* derives from the Hindi terms for 'five' ('panch') and 'council' ('yat'), literally meaning 'the council of the five'. Claims to an ancient historical tradition of local self-government in the form of Panchayats, however, have to be regarded carefully. Historical records indeed mention local village councils with administrative purposes—for instance during the rule of the

Vijayanagara Empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—but there is no direct line to the modern day institutions.

The evolution of the modern day Panchayats starts with Indian constitution of 1950 and the provisions part IX which allowed the States of the Indian Union to set up institutions of local government. Part IX, however, did not define the exact nature of these institutions nor gave it any unified provisions for state legislation. The first State to implement Panchayats at the village level was the then Madras Presidency with the ‘Madras Village Panchayat Act 1950’. The act made elected bodies—called Panchayats—in villages with more than 500 inhabitants mandatory, but delegated only minor duties and privileges, such as health care and water conservation, to them. A huge step towards the modern Panchayati Raj System was the result of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957 which recommended the establishment of a three-tier PRS on the village, block and district level. The recommendations also included the aims of promoting political consciousness amongst the local population and the settlement of local problems by local means. The next milestone was the establishment of the Ashok Mehta Committee in 1978 after the breakdown of the Congress rule at the centre in 1977. On the basis of the recommendations given by the committee several states ratified Panchayati Raj Acts that incorporated many features which are main elements of the PRS even today. Such features are the representation of SCs and STs, the relegation of planning and development activities and political party competition for seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI).

India-wide uniformity, however, was still not achieved. Nevertheless, the new State acts were tremendously successful in some instances, like West Bengal. There, a land-tenure act, which was the focus of the ‘Operation Barga’ started in 1978 and was implemented through the PRI. It produced legal security for millions of sharecroppers. The 1986 L.M. Singhvi Committee first introduced the idea of constitutional status of the PRS and brought the focus from the district to the village level while the 1988 Sarkaria Commission engaged the debate on a constitutional status for Panchayats. Efforts in the direction of constitutional recognition of the PRS by the Congress government under Rajiv Gandhi at the Union level were unsuccessful due to the rejection by the opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha. This changed in 1992. Against the backdrop of the new liberalisation policies of the Union government and the new look on decentralisation within the five-year plan of 1992–97, the situation of the PRS was reconsidered. New challenges for local governments arose which could not be met under the old system. With the ratification of the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1992 Panchayats became the third tier of Indian federalism. The 73rd amendment gave the PRS a unified structure, mandatory for all PRI in every state (except Kashmir which occupies a special role within the Indian constitution), and relegated a wide and specified array of functions, privileges and duties to the PRI.

73rd Amendment

Following these earlier attempts to provide Panchayats with an independent constitutional status, the Lok Sabha in 1992 ratified the 73rd Amendment Act to the Constitution of India, which came into force in 1993. Based on already existing constitutional provisions, namely articles 40 and 243, the PRS became an integral part of the Indian federal system. The amendment itself states the expressive purpose of furthering social justice and democratic participation via seat reservations for marginalised groups

Table 5.6 Trust in local/state/central government (in percent)

Question: How much trust/confidence do you have in the central government: a great deal, somewhat or no trust at all?

	<i>Local Government</i>	<i>State Government</i>	<i>Central Government</i>
<hr/>			
1996			
<i>A Great Deal</i>	39	37.2	35.2
<i>Somewhat</i>	37.8	43.6	42.5
<i>No Trust at All</i>	23.2	19.2	22.3
<hr/>			
2009			
<i>A Great Deal</i>	37	39.5	40.8
<i>Somewhat</i>	43.3	42.6	40.2
<i>No Trust at All</i>	5.7	4.5	3.7
<i>No opinion</i>	14	13.3	15.2

Data Source: National Election Studies 1996 and 2009, CSDS (Delhi).

and the establishment of village assemblies (Gram Sabhas) which are accessible to all villagers. It also defines mandatory election periods and direct elections for all seats at the PRIs. The 73rd Amendment was a big intrusion into States rights since it gave clear orders and definitions of how the PRS had to be designed. Formerly, this was largely left to the state governments. The new constitutional rank of the PRS provided the State governments with a specific and unified model for their PRIs, which had to be enforced all over India—with the exception of the Union territories and certain tribal areas—with the same features. These features were a multiple-tier structure, usually three tiers, direct elections, reserved seats for marginalised groups, specified and fixed terms of tenure and a list of mandatory duties and privileges. The 29 duties and privileges of the new PRIs are fixed in the 11th Schedule of the constitution, which heavily centres on infrastructural, agricultural and commercial development and social welfare.

The results of the PRS reform are mixed at best. Since the enforcement of the 73rd Amendment in 1993, the PRIs have been subject to much criticism, especially concerning widespread corruption and nepotism, partisan politics and inefficiency. While the new PRIs were relatively successful in enhancing political representation of marginalised groups, such as women, SCs and STs, and the strengthening of their societal positions, their developmental impact fell short of the generally high expectations. As of 2013, the PRIs still must struggle to fulfil their roles as agencies for economic development, although their inclusion into large-scale projects like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes.¹⁷ Some evidence of trust in all three levels of government is presented in Table 5.6.

Combining strength with accountability: why Indian federalism works

The expanding and successful Indian federation has helped transform the common adage ‘unity in diversity’ to something more akin to unity ‘and’ diversity. All Indian regions have their specific concepts of a macro, binding structure. Each also has unique ways of accommodating latent conflicts of belief and practice, resulting in regional and local diversity. The same practice has been adopted by modern institutions like political parties and trade unions which, under the umbrella of a modern macro ideology and manifesto, embrace considerable divergence in doctrine and practice.

The legacy of British rule with regard to federalism can be best understood in terms of the British solicitude to reconcile administrative efficiency and regional difference. The pre-Independence attempts by the British to institute a federal state, seen as biased in favour of the Muslim League, was perceived by the Indian National Congress as an attempt to weaken the centre. This path dependency of the pre-Independence context led to a ‘union of States’ (the word federation is not to be found in the Indian constitution) with the dual purpose of limiting the tyranny of the majority and generating strength through a union.¹⁸

Looking back to the Partition riots which cast their long shadow on the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, one can see the reason for the institutional design of federalism with a central bias that emerged. But what explains its continuation once the immediate peril had passed? Comparative federal theory tells us that a durable federal design derives its resilience from its success at reconciling the contradictory goals of cohesion and diversity.¹⁹ Usually, one can assume such a design to be the product of a context with a tradition of political bargaining among autonomous units, and of a political culture leavened with the history of a ‘social contract’. This is usually the case with the experience of Western federal states.

None of these *a priori* conditions prepares the student of comparative federalism for the Indian case. With a constitution that is more the result of a transfer of power than of a concerted, organized quest for independent statehood based on a contract, India stands apart from the world’s major federations. After the 73rd amendment to the constitution in 1993,²⁰ India developed a three-tier system of government where authority is divided between the central level, the federal units, and about half a million village councils. Thanks to the obligatory quota for women and marginal social groups belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, these bodies have become an important ground for the recruitment of local elites into the political system and broadening the social base of the modern state.

With a clear, constitutionally guaranteed division of power,²¹ effectively policed by an independent Supreme Court, direct elections to the *panchayats* and central and regional governments monitored by an independent Election Commission, and the capacity of the political process to sustain a dynamic balance between the levels of government, India exhibits many of the features of federalism. But India’s membership in this exclusive club remains a matter of some dispute.²² The political evidence with regard to the characteristics of a federal process²³ is present and can be seen in K.C. Wheare’s brief review of the conditions of effective federalism that suggests four necessary conditions for a federal design.²⁴ The first requires at least two levels of government, each with independent spheres of administrative and legislative competence. This condition is more than fulfilled by the 73rd amendment to the constitution by which India actually has three levels of government. The federal division of powers allocates responsibility for matters of national importance to the union government and regional matters to the State governments. Issues of national importance that nevertheless are of regional and local character are allocated to the concurrent list on the understanding that in the case of conflict, the national law should prevail. Residuary powers are allocated to the Union government (Table 5.3). Second, the constitution recognizes the principle of independent tax bases, though with the combination of democratic pressure for tax reduction on land, education and healthcare, which fall under the scope of state legislation, States have lost out on the financial front, and expansion of the economy has benefited the central government more. Third, a written constitution from which each side derives

its legislative power makes sure that boundaries are clearly demarcated. Fourth, there must be a system of independent judicial courts to arbitrate between the centre and the constituent units.

Thus, in terms of the classic features of federal states, the Indian constitution fulfils the necessary conditions. However, the Achilles' heel of the institutional arrangement lies in the financing. The federal division of powers gives the Union jurisdiction over taxes that have an interstate base while taxes with a local base have been allotted to the States. The more flexible and lucrative sources of revenue—income tax, corporation tax, customs duty and excise duties—are allocated to the Union list. The Constitution, however, has recognized the States' position of financial weakness and has provided a number of mechanisms to help them meet their deficit. The constitution provides three methods for the transfer of resources from the centre to the States, including:

- 1 the transfer of net proceeds from certain taxes and duties such as stamp duties, duties on toilet and medicinal preparations, estate duty on non-agricultural property, duties of succession to property other than non-agricultural land, and taxes on railway fares and freight;
- 2 the compulsory sharing of certain taxes like income tax; and
- 3 permissive sharing of excise taxes as well as conditional and unconditional grants-in-aid.

The mechanisms for balancing the financial might of the union government and the needs of the States are the Finance Commission, a quasi-judicial body appointed by the President for a duration of five years, and the Planning Commission, whose recommendations had to be discussed by the National Development Council.²⁵

The institutional arrangements of federalism, carrying the double legacy of the euphoria of Independence and the fear of disintegration in the face of the Partition riots, show abundant evidence of a bias in favour of the Union. The central parliament enjoys the extraordinary power of legislation on state subjects that affect the national interest when authorized by the Rajya Sabha.²⁶ The consent of States is not required for alteration of their names or boundaries. The overwhelming financial power of the Union, already mentioned above, gives the Union government the edge when it comes to coercing state governments. Similarly, the comprehensive authority of the Union Planning Commission, very much Nehru's brainchild and an instrument of central initiatives regarding development projects, plays an additional role in regard to central directives and guidance. The governor, formal head of the state government, was designed to be a central appointee rather than an elected, local official. The All India Services, a legacy of the British colonial framework, continued under central command. Finally, the Emergency provisions in Articles 352, 356 and 360 became a part of everyday politics and not just the exception during the Congress hegemony and particularly under Indira Gandhi. In consequence, Wheare voicing the scepticism of many experts, described the Indian case as 'a quasi-federation—a unitary state with subsidiary federal features rather than a federal state with subsidiary unitary features'.²⁷

The ambivalent legal position that the Indian constitution accords to the constituent States of the Union must appear startling to the federalist. As mentioned earlier, the construction of the Union did not result from a decision by a group of independent political units, to shed bits of their sovereignty out of shared interest to create a federal

state. The Indian Union and the provincial governments were simultaneous creations of the Constituent Assembly, in which the latter did not have any special representation. Furthermore, the central government gradually shifted the boundaries of the units that existed at the time of Independence and started to create new States. The first major redesign of State boundaries occurred in 1956 and 1957 through the States Reorganization Act, after prolonged agitation in South India for a reorganization of States along linguistic and cultural boundaries.²⁸

Despite the misgivings of experts and the asymmetry in the structural relations between the union and the States, regional governments were not the mere minions of the union government. The Indian Supreme Court, vindicating the claims of Watts regarding the importance of an institutional arrangement to guarantee the autonomy of the constituent units,²⁹ declared that

the fact that under the scheme of our Constitution greater power is conferred upon the Centre vis-à-vis the States does not mean that States are mere appendages of the Centre. Within the sphere allotted to them, States are supreme. The Centre cannot tamper with their powers.³⁰

Political dominance by a single ethnic group has been the bane of many postcolonial states. The dominance of Pakistani politics by the leadership of Punjab, or the great sense of insecurity that the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka feels because of the dominance of the Sinhala majority, both in terms of numbers and area, is enough evidence of the potential consequences of the structural asymmetry of the union. In the Indian case, the Supreme Court has confirmed the status of India's federalism as part of the basic structure of the Indian constitution.³¹ Thus, the Supreme Court has codified this institutional design which was not expressly laid out in the constitution of India.³²

Power-sharing and the federalization of national politics

The pattern of elite recruitment employed by the Congress party during the period of its hegemony (1952–67) shows that local and regional talents rose to prominence within the party organization and moved horizontally to government. Subsequently, new, upwardly mobile social groups entered the electoral arena as political parties, organized on the basis of caste and ethnic networks, which aspired to getting office in their own right. This shows a steady expansion in the social base of leadership in India. That satisfies the first two of the conditions for power-sharing mentioned by Watts. The competition for scarce natural resources among bureaucrats and political leaders from Indian States is a good example of the third condition at work. With the decline of the Congress party, however, intra-party federalization has been supplanted by an entirely different intra-party and inter-party system. Nevertheless, even though regional parties are viewed as champions of special interests in the States, leaders who aim to become national figures try to place the region in the larger context of the nation. Eventually, as members of national coalitions of regional parties, they start to pose as national leaders, ready to compromise and conciliate among conflicting regional interests. This places a measure of restraint on political impropriety and policing by coalition partners who do not wish to have their own political futures ruined through a partner's misconduct. The shifting of Laloo Prasad Yadav from Bihar to the Railway Ministry in the central

government is a case in point.³³ Thus even as the dominance of the Congress party has declined, the multi-party system that replaced it has produced the same institutionalized method of regional conflict resolution within a national framework.

The social origins of these ‘new regionalist’ champions who become born-again nationalists, following the logic of the Indian political process, help to identify the dynamic process that sustains the federal system in India. These new regionalists (who should be distinguished from the old regionalists who were given to taking non-negotiable positions during the period of Congress dominance) are likely to be upwardly mobile educated males, the erstwhile ‘bullock capitalists’³⁴ who have now graduated beyond exclusive reliance on agriculture to other avenues of upward mobility. The new type of regional leaders has reinforced the link of India’s centre with the periphery.

Having established themselves locally, regionalists have now set their sights on constructing the kind of nation that they want. They are using their alliances with similar forces from outside their region to define the nature of the national community in their own way. Recent events in different parts of the country have demonstrated that the pursuit of these goals cannot only coexist with similar aspirations elsewhere but that regional movements can, in fact, reinforce one another by pooling their political resources. Hence one finds the unprecedented scenes of political leaders from one part of India campaigning for regional parties in other parts of the country. The Congress system (1947–67) incorporated local and regional interests at lower levels of the internally federalized system. The new element in Indian politics has made the processes of regional and national consultation that are carried out within large coalitions of national and regional parties, more systematic, transparent and institutionalized. The central government no longer holds a monopoly over defining what the nation is and, deciding who has the right to speak in its name. This has opened up new ways of drawing in people from India’s outlying areas and weaving them into a more composite, multinational culture of India.

As one can see from both the 1999 and 2004 Lok Sabha elections and the subsequent government coalitions,³⁵ regional parties have become part and parcel of government formation processes even at the central level. As in the case of the 2004 government formation process, some regional politicians have been able to secure more than their fair share of influence at the central level. While the 21-member Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) secured only two cabinet-rank ministries, the Dravida Munnetra Khazhagam (DMK), despite its limited strength of only 16 MPs, was allocated three cabinet ministries. At the same time, the RJD could secure a first tentative success with the inclusion of a Backward States Grant Fund—of which Bihar expected to be a major beneficiary—in the Common Minimum Programme of government after the 2004 elections.³⁶ This exposes the ambiguous nature of the federal bargaining process, where office means influence above and beyond the limits of the portfolio which a politician is allocated. Thus while some regions can hope that their interests are represented through regional power brokers at the central government level, other States fear being left behind whenever their regional parties are not included in the national government coalition.³⁷

The political processes of the 1990s show the integration of federal norms in the game plans of local and regional political leaders. Rather than taking a mechanical, anti-Delhi stance as their only *raison d'être*, the new breed of ambitious, upwardly mobile leaders of India have learned to play by the rules even while they challenge them, and thus have developed for themselves a new, federal space in which the nation and the region can coexist.³⁸

The violent and chaotic situation caused by the Partition of British India and the Pakistan-backed invasion of Kashmir formed the background to the writing of the Constitution. These danger signals for the new Republic called for a centralized, effective executive in Delhi, with the requisite flexibility to rein in unruly governments in the regions and localities. And yet, the need for evolving a democratic, collective agenda of social reform and economic development in a country of continental proportions required cooperation more than rule by fiat from above. The result has been a federal design that has endured the test of time and has become, in its own right, a political tool of democracy, development and governance. The chapter has analysed this argument through the institutional arrangement of federalism, its anomalies and an evaluation of the practical results achieved.

In view of the high mortality rate of federalism in changing societies, the resilience of India's federalism leads one to ask: has India just been lucky? It can be argued that while chance, in the form of helpful structural conditions (and the fortuitous Partition of the country that made the political system of India more cohesive), has certainly played a positive role in the success of India's federalism. The agency of the post-Independence leaders and their successors built further on this foundation. Looking back, one can admire the prescience with which the framers of the Indian constitution equipped the Indian state to respond to the demands for autonomy through the dual mechanisms of individual and group rights, as well as the federal division of powers in normal times and the effective union of powers in the times of emergency.

During the first phase of India's constitutional development, some of these instruments were useful in empowering political majorities below the level of the national state through the effective enactment of provincial administrations. The second phase of constitutional development through the States' reorganization of 1956–57 created linguistically homogeneous States and counterbalanced the likely chauvinism. In its third phase, the process of constitutional development of federalism initiated by the 73rd amendment of 1993, India has witnessed the deepening of the power-sharing principle by the statutory power now accorded to village councils. Finally, in the fourth and current phase, the liberalization of the Indian economy has produced an atmosphere where State governments have emerged as stakeholders in the new economic order rather than clients of an almighty union, dependent on a handout to balance their budgets.

These institutional changes in India's federation explain the fusion of modern and traditional political cultures, historical contingency, and the fortuitous legacy of great political events like the Partition of India. During the critical years of transition from British rule and the consolidation of popular democracy in India, the Congress party provided the link between the modern state and the traditional society. Congress rule, both at the centre and in the States, provided informal channels of communication and the balancing of national, regional and sectional interests. The politics of coalitions that has replaced Congress hegemony has given a public voice to the new debate on the nature of the nation. In consequence, the search for regional allies has now become an imperative for all national parties.

The new group of highly visible and effective regional leaders, drawing on their power bases in the States, which often include people from India's periphery (in terms of religion, elite caste status, or geographic distance from the centre), can generate a different concept of the nation-state that is better suited to the spirit of our times. When speaking in the national mode, regional leaders do not rule out the need to be well-informed and decisive in the defence of the security and integrity of the nation. But in

terms of actual policies, they are much more willing and (in view of their social bases) able to listen to the minorities, to regions with historical grievances, and to sections of society that entered the post-Independence politics with unsolved, pre-Independence (in some cases, pre-modern) grievances. It is thanks to these political ‘fixers’—culture brokers who mediate between the union and the regions—and the emerging multi-party democracy of India that politics is not merely an anomic battle for power and short-term gain. Instead, system provides for the release of pent-up creativity and visions that provide a fertile and cohesive backdrop to the realignment of social forces as well. Far from being its antithesis, the region has actually emerged as the nursery of the nation.

The constitutional, legislative and policy instruments that India has drawn upon to reach the positive outcomes in the development of federalism, have an important implication for comparative analysis of the federal process. Whereas old institutionalisms, such as Wheare, prescribed a given set of institutions as the necessary and sufficient basis of a federal State,³⁹ neo-institutionalists show the importance of being pragmatic in devising the institutions appropriate to specific cultural, religious and historical contexts.⁴⁰ The creation of sub-regional States like Gorkhaland (a result of protracted negotiations between the Congress government of New Delhi, the communist government of West Bengal, and the Gorkha leadership) and, more recently, the creation of three new States during the regime of the NDA (considered opposed to further divisions of India) is in every sense a genuine and unprecedented innovation, guided by the heuristic notion of power-sharing and solid, political common sense. The rules of the federal system, rather than being exogenous to the federal process, have become endogenous to it.

In contrast to India, in Pakistan, also a successor state with the British legacy of an English educated elite schooled in the grammar of parliamentary politics for almost as long as the Congress party, federalism has followed a different trajectory. The undoing of federalism and consequent split of the Pakistani state in 1971 came through the combination of short-sighted leaders and trigger-happy generals, without the balancing factor of the regional and local leaders—the unshaven and ill-clad power brokers who throng the corridors of power in Delhi and the State secretariats. It is true that India, whose government-in-waiting—the Indian National Congress—was already forged in the 1930s and whose links with the constituencies remained intact even as Partition moved the leaders of the Muslim League away from their political base in India, held the better cards. Leaders like Nehru, rather than taking short-term advantage of the preponderant role of the union and using this power to promote partisan advantage, used it with judicious discretion, taming the obdurate satraps of larger regions and reassuring the weak and insecure States of the rightness of their just demands. One has to admit that the Indians played their federal cards rather well. Of course, as the fragile state of the North-East and continued dissension in Kashmir show, the parallel processes of federalization and national integration are far from complete.

Conclusion

The recognition of political coalitions as the most adept institutional form of politics in India has reinforced the concept of federalism as the most practical and effective method of centre-State and inter-State relations. The literature suggests four general conditions to explain the federalization of India’s national politics regarding the policy process. The first and foremost is ‘elite accommodation’. Next is ‘public involvement’ though it

may ‘complicate the patterns of negotiation for the establishment of a federal system’.⁴¹ An atmosphere of ‘competition and collusion’ between intergovernmental agencies is the third condition.⁴² In the fourth place, drawing on Riker, Watts mentions ‘the role and impact of political parties, including their number, their character, and the relations among federal, State, and local branches’ as helpful in explaining the dynamism of federal processes.⁴³

An analysis of the integration of regions into the national political community from the dark days of the Partition riots of 1946–47 or the rising secessionist movements of the critical 1980s, shows that India’s unfolding federalism is both robust and resilient. The next chapter takes up the formal and informal modes of articulation and aggregation of interest that criss-cross the country, and which holds individual States in a national grid sustaining the federal principle of ‘self-rule’, leavened by ‘shared rule’.⁴⁴

Notes

- 1 See, for example, the comment of Paul Appleby (1957).
- 2 See the comment of Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, in the epigraph to this chapter.
- 3 See Mitra and Lewis (1996) for detailed analysis of cases from India and her neighbours.
- 4 The anti-Hindi agitations in Madras in the 1950s were based on the fear of domination by North India and formed the basis of a movement for a separate state to be called Dravidstan. Similar anti-Delhi feelings were roused in West Bengal for much of the 1960s and 1970s, in Punjab in the 1980s, and, currently, in Kashmir and in the North East.
- 5 Language is a malleable concept because, as we have noticed in the case of Telangana, there can be shades of grey within the same language family, in this case Telugu, which is spoken differently in the coastal districts as compared to the Telangana region. However, linguistic difference, while necessary, may not be sufficient for the formation of a new State which is a function of the intensity of the movement and depth of its social base. See Subrata Mitra, ‘The Kosala Movement in western Odisha: Sub-regional sentiments, countervailing identities and stalemated sub-nationalism,’ *India Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2014), pp. 372–98.
- 6 These arguments draw on North’s core insight regarding what makes institutions work (1991).
- 7 Jenkins (1999) describes this process as “provincial Darwinism”, p. 133.
- 8 North (1991), p. 7.
- 9 These letters, which are a veritable treasure trove on the politics of the early post-Independence decades, are now available in a five-volume set edited by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund (1989).
- 10 Kothari (1970).
- 11 Jenkins (1999).
- 12 These issues have been discussed at length in Chapter 7.
- 13 In 1992, following the first generation of liberalization policies, coffee growers were for the first time permitted to sell 30 percent of their crop in the open market, effectively ending the monopoly control of government coffee boards. The free sale quota was increased to 50 percent in 1993. In April 1995, in a long-anticipated move, all obligations to the coffee board were removed for ‘small growers’ (those with land holdings of less than 10 hectares). As Jenkins puts it,

‘In need of new sources of revenue, states with substantial coffee growing operations began to cast an avaricious eye on coffee growers who had received “windfall” profits. The Karnataka government, for instance, was able to raise resources in this way, justifying the new tax by saying that the coffee growers who had benefited would be prepared to contribute resources for the welfare of the poor.’ These adaptations further delink States’ economic fates from one another—contributing to the pattern of provincial Darwinism that ‘has reduced the effectiveness of resistance among State-level political elites.

(Jenkins, 1999, pp. 132–33)

- 14 Saez (2002), p. 215.
- 15 See Bhattacharyya (2001), Saez (2002), and Arora (1995) for a detailed analysis of federalism in India.
- 16 Rao and Singh (2004).
- 17 See Patrick Heller, "Democracy and Development: Decentralized Planning in Kerala," (with T.M. Thomas Isaac) in Archon Fung and Erik O. Wright (eds.), *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Democracy* (London: Verso Press 2003), and Patrick Heller, "The Politics and Institutional Design of Participatory Democracy: Lessons from Kerala, India," (with T.M. Thomas Isaac) pp. 405–43 in Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon* (London: Verso, 2005).
- 18 Article 1 of the Indian constitution puts it this way: 'India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.'
- 19 Watts (1999, p. 7) famously put it as 'combining self-rule and shared rule'.
- 20 In addition, the vertical expansion of the federal structure—to which a third tier was recently added through the inclusion of India's half million villages, with constitutionally mandated authority and financial autonomy and an obligatory minimum of 30 percent of seats for women—deserves careful attention. This has turned the federal process into a major source of legitimization and democratization of power in India.
- 21 Following Indian usage, the constituent units of the Indian federation will be called 'States' and 'state' will refer to the central state.
- 22 Watts (1998, p. 118), in his comprehensive study of federal systems, counts 23 states as full federal states but one senses a certain reluctance to admit India as a full member of this club. 'India and Malaysia, marked by deep-rooted multilingual, multicultural and multiracial diversity, have nevertheless managed to cohere for half and a third of a century respectively, but are at a critical phase in their development.'
- 23 Following the usage of Watts, federal process is used in this chapter as a descriptive category which refers to the presence of a 'broad genus of federal arrangements' in a political system. These characteristics, which could in principle be composed into a scale, are drawn from the definition of a federation as

a compound polity combining constituent units and a general government, each possessing powers delegated to it by the people through a constitution, each empowered to deal directly with the citizens in the exercise of a significant portion of its legislative, administrative and taxing powers, and each directly elected by its citizens

(Watts 1998, pp. 117, 121)

- 24 Wheare (1964).
- 25 Following the dismantlement of the Planning Commission (discussed in chapter seven), the Modi government has shown appreciation for the autonomy and fiscal responsibility of the State governments.
- 26 Article 249 of the Indian constitution.
- 27 Wheare as cited in Basu (1985), p. 58.
- 28 For an assessment of linguistic and cultural diversity and its impact on federalism in India, see Mitra (2001).
- 29 Watts (1998), p. 126.
- 30 S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India, 1994 (3) SCC 1, 216.
- 31 A similar arrangement can be found in the German constitution (the Grundgesetz or Basic Law) which does not specify the number of federal units (Laender) which constitute Germany and allows for the alteration of boundaries—albeit only with the consent of the people living in the territory concerned (Article 29)—but declares the abolition of federalism, i.e., the division of the country into constituent units as such, as beyond the power of parliament to amend (Article 79, Sec. 3, Grundgesetz).
- 32 Nonetheless, the alteration of boundaries, not least in the recent case of the creation of the State of Jharkhand out of Bihar, has invited protest on several occasions and this instrument, while creating opportunities for greater autonomy for certain ethnic or linguistic groups, has also placed constraints on the political process.
- 33 Laloo Prasad Yadav, India's railway minister, was known during the 15 years that he and his wife, Rabri Devi, were successive chief ministers of the State of Bihar, for his earthy realism

and rustic lifestyle, which included keeping cows in the garden of his official residence. He was also famous for failing to improve the lot of one of India's poorest and most lawless States, and for a raft of corruption charges that put him in jail five times. In May 2004, he was made railways minister in Delhi.... Mr Yadav is a wily and disarming politician and has confounded his critics by becoming one of the country's most successful railway ministers. ('India's Railway Minister with big ambitions', *The Economist*, 29 July–4 August 2006, p. 54).

- 34 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), pp. 49–55.
- 35 The BJP-led NDA coalition under Atal Bihari Vajpayee initially consisted of 16 parties in the Lok Sabha, out of which only the BJP was a national party, and the cabinet included many veteran regional politicians. In the fourteenth Lok Sabha, the 10-party coalition led by the Congress party under the name United Progressive Alliance and supported by the left parties included only two national parties, INC and NCP. Of the cabinet ministers, two key portfolios, IT (Dayanidhi Maran) and Railways (Laloo Prasad Yadav), were allocated to regional figureheads.
- 36 'UPA Government to adhere to six basic principles of governance', *The Hindu*, 28 May 2004.
- 37 The practice of giving representation in the government to regional parties has been followed by the Modi government despite that the BJP has the requisite majority in the Lok Sabha on its own and does not strictly need to share power with the constituents of the NDA.
- 38 The integrative power of this model is at its best in Tamil Nadu where a federal 'deal' can be struck with a specific group of actors, such as the DMK. But when the actors themselves are fragmented or not a part of the negotiation (as in Kashmir), the model is no longer very effective in producing a legitimate, federal solution. See Mitra and Lewis (1996).
- 39 Wheare (1964).
- 40 Watts (1998).
- 41 Watts (1998), p. 128.
- 42 Ibid., p. 130.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Lijphart explains how India combines federalism with consociationalism to achieve an equitable distribution of resources over regions and social groups (Lijphart 1996).

6 Elections, political parties, demand groups and political movements

Multiple modes of representation,
articulation and aggregation of interests

In the 130 years or so since the Mutiny ... the idea of freedom has gone everywhere in India. Independence was worked for by people more or less at the top; the freedom it brought has worked its way down. People everywhere have ideas now of who they are and what they owe themselves. The process quickened with the economic development that came after Independence; what was hidden in 1962, or not easy to see, what perhaps was only in a state of becoming, has become clearer. The liberation of spirit that has come to India could not come as release alone. In India with its layer below layer of distress and cruelty, it had to come as disturbance. It had to come as rage and revolt. India was now a country of a million little mutinies.

Naipaul (1990), p. 517

Like a shop-keeper in an Indian bazaar, it [the Congress Party] squats with its large, flabby shape in the middle of its wares, the heart of a political market place in which bargaining and dissent are the language of the discourse.

Morris-Jones (1966), p. 455

The idea of an organised interest group implies a certain professionalization of the representative process. The force of its case rests at least as much on technical persuasiveness as on the pressure of numbers. Demand groups, by contrast, do not work primarily in institutionally defined policy arenas. They rely less on expertise and lobbying skill than on symbolic and agitational politics. The tactics and style of demand groups have become a highly elaborated political art form that speaks of India's indigenous political culture, mobilizes support, influences public opinion and gains bargaining advantages. Its ad hoc and spontaneous tactics include public dramas such as *padyatras* (political pilgrimages), hartals (shutdowns), *rasta rokos* (road blocks) and *gheraos* (lock-ins).

Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi* (1987), p. 253

Introduction

The existence of multiple modes of interest articulation and aggregation, combining conventional methods of campaign participation, voting, lobbying and contacting leaders and administrators with indigenous forms of protest has become an effective basis for governance, transition to democracy and its consolidation in India. The fortuitous legacy of Gandhian satyagraha which, under colonial rule, had blended participation in elections with limited suffrage and rational protest in a seemingly seamless flow has now developed many variants, taking radically different forms in the regions with well settled administrative structures as Gujarat and Karnataka to more troubled regions such as

Kashmir, the North-East, the ‘red corridor’ of India, linking the hill districts of central and eastern India with pockets of Naxalite strength in the South. The active national media, NGOs, pro-active judiciary and national political parties give articulation to these regional and local phenomena. Thus, state-society relations in India benefit from systematic intermediation of both modern and traditional kinds, creating an ethos of effective and continuous interaction which helps rebels become stakeholders, or at least aspire to join the ranks of the ruling elite in a conceivable future. The combined effect of all these methods is strong enough to dull the sharp edges of class and ethnic conflict and to transform what could have become a state of polarised conflict into a state of stalemated conflict.

The post-independence tradition of multiple modes of intermediation between state and society has had its repercussions on the nature of representation as well, for it has empowered the subaltern classes of India to enter the political arena. The lingering shadow of prominent leaders of India’s Freedom Movement like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru on post-Independence politics and institutions might give the impression that Indian democracy is elite-driven. Such a characterisation would not have been entirely out of place during the early, post-Independence decades when Nehru and the Congress Party were the main fulcra of Indian politics. However, this dominance was severely challenged during the turbulent 1960s when parties opposed to the Congress discovered the potential power that lay in broad-based, anti-Congress coalitions. The rise of regional parties, and groups from the social periphery, particularly, the backward classes, gave this strategy a new, powerful, social base. These developments, unsteady at first, have now crystallised into a multi-party democracy with competitive elections as its most important driving force. How this process of mass input by the way of articulation and aggregation of demands through elections, movements and political parties takes place, will be explained in this chapter.

The role of intermediate organisations such as political parties, pressure groups and other activities like lobbying, that help in the articulation and aggregation of demands are taken up for detailed analysis in this chapter. We shall see in this chapter why the process does not always function smoothly in India like in many changing societies where these intermediary organizations are not well organized and where the capacity of the state often falls short of demands articulated by mobilized social groups.¹ However, while in many transitional societies, as we learn from Huntington (1968), violent protest movements often lead to chaotic dissolution of political order, in India, paradoxically, political movements by demand groups sometimes actually strengthens the process of democratic transition and consolidation. In some contexts, such as India, protest movements can actually become an alternative and supplementary methods for the articulation of grievances, eventually accommodated into the policy process. In its critical analysis of the process of interest articulation and aggregation in India, the chapter illustrates how India has managed to develop a ‘two-track strategy’ where rational protest complements normal channels of participation, transforming rebels into stakeholders, and contributing to overall legitimacy of the political system.

Democracy and the challenge of legitimacy

The legitimacy of political systems is conditional on their capacity to accommodate demands emerging from society. In post-industrial, liberal democracies, this is typically done through articulation and aggregation of interests by political parties and elections,

and the implementation of the mandate by the government, under the watchful eyes of the opposition, the media, the judiciary and other watchdog bodies. The entire process takes place within the institutional arrangement that underpins the political system. That said, fringe groups that do not consider themselves integral parts of the system exist even in advanced democracies like France and sometimes take to the streets to force the government to acknowledge their presence and respond to their demands. In India, which combines modern political institutions modelled on advanced, liberal democracies with a traditional society in the process of rapid transition, the articulation and aggregation of interests, as one can see from the epigraphs to this chapter, can be more complex.

Despite spectacular breakdown of intermediation in some highly-publicised events such as the destruction of the Babri Mosque (1992) in the Northern city of Ayodhya or the Godhra riots of 2002 in Gujarat, India, overall has succeeded in creating a solid network of institutions channelling participation in the policy process. Among post-colonial, transitional societies, India stands pretty much alone in this respect. Conflict of the modern state and traditional society has sometimes led to the contestation of norms of conventional participation. Under imaginative leadership, this has generated the motivation for leaders of both sides to collaborate in the creation of new norms of participation and their institutionalisation in the form of hybrid structures where both sides—leaders of the modern state and their contestants from traditional society—are represented. India's elections, political parties, movements and the tradition of direct political action that date back to the Freedom Movement, combine to create a dynamic link between the government and the people. This chapter examines how India's conventional intermediary organisations as provided for by the Constitution and a variety of homespun and hybrid institutions and processes, help carry out political transactions at the national, regional and local levels.²

Representation, institutional complexity, and the policy process

India has multiple arenas where decisions that deeply affect the lives and identity of people are taken. The system combines the vertical separation of powers between the executive, legislature, and the judiciary with horizontal division of powers between the centre, regions and localities (see Table 4.1). During the early decades following Independence, the fragmentation of authority that this scheme gave rise to, was overcome by the all-pervasive presence of the Congress Party where party channels had provided an alternative mechanism for interest articulation and aggregation.³ Conflict of interests and principles could be negotiated informally within the organization of the party. The period of the two decades of informal intra-party negotiation after 1947 set the basis for institutionalized conflict resolution, and made the coherence and continuity of public policy at the national level possible in the era of coalition politics and the divergence between parties in power at the centre and in the States.

The formal and informal processes of policy making in India are enriched by three factors. The first of these is the vast range of modes of representation, stretching from 'modern' organizations of employers, businessmen, industrialists and labour at the one extreme to 'traditional' forms, involving caste, tribe and ethnic groups at the other. In addition, there are unconventional political forms like *Satyagraha*, *dharna*, *boycott* and *rasta roko*, among many others, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. Secondly, there is no practice of 'closed shop', where specific organizations have monopoly control over

the representation of interests in a particular trade or activity. Instead, considerable competition among organizations seeking to represent the same interest leads to the fragmentation of labour unions and interest groups. This has stymied their growth. In the third place, to generate traction, India's political actors often combine diverse forms of action and organizations such as parties, interest and pressure groups, and movements to pursue their goals. The presence of a free and active media, non-governmental organisations and judicial intervention has produced an environment that gives legitimacy to the desire to articulate demands and have them aggregated for the process of generating appropriate public policy. Consequently, India's levels of interest articulation (but, not aggregation) are comparable to what one might find in long-established Western democratic states where the trade union movement has had a longer history.

Elections

Following Partition, the parts of India that had a long experience of British rule and Indian resistance to it remained within India. The Congress Party found itself with a shrunken land mass under its control but the areas that constituted it were precisely those where it had deep political roots. Its top leaders, known as the High Command, took over the task of 'getting the vote out' in the first General Election of 1952 by transforming the party organization, spread out throughout the country, into an efficient electoral machine. The enormous resources that political power brought to the hands of these leaders for the first time already schooled in governance because of their participation in provincial governments under British rule, helped. The Congress organization became the fountainhead of patronage, earning for itself the sobriquet of the 'quota-permit-raj'.

The Muslim League, on the other hand, having long advocated the Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for Muslims of India, found itself politically beleaguered, once its leaders had migrated from India to take up the reins of power in the new state. The main strongholds of the League were the parts of India where Muslims were in a minority whose interests the League championed. These provinces—Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh in particular—stayed back in India. In Pakistan—both in the West and the East—the Muslim League leaders found themselves contesting the authority of local and regional leaders who had long represented the local populations. Denied the organic links with the grassroots, the authority of the League ebbed away as kinship, language and local interests gradually emerged in a forceful way, replacing the call of the Islamic homeland as the main plank of political transaction, creating a legitimacy crisis and paving the way for the entry of the military into politics. As such, India and Pakistan, born out of the same political and legal structure of British colonial rule, evolved in two different trajectories.

In post-independent India, political transaction and election campaigns rather than top-down social transformation based on a central ideology, ruthlessly implemented by a cadre-based organization became the main feature of India's political process. In a risky but well-calculated move, India's leaders put everything on the auction block of electoral politics right at the outset. One can notice this in the campaigns already in the first General Election of 1951–52. Even the very definition of the nation, its physical boundaries, and the basic principles of its economic organization were not considered over and above politics. Since then, every election has been an occasion for individuals to recognize the value of their votes (see Box 4.2). The result, as we shall see in this

chapter, was that the great school of democracy quickly multiplied the numbers of its enthusiastic pupils and continued to generate both political intelligence and leaders skilled at political transaction and negotiation. These moved in seamlessly to the regional and national arenas, when the first generation of leaders identified with the Independence movement, left the scene.

Colonial India was no stranger to elections. But these operated on franchise limited to those meeting educational and property criteria. Universal adult franchise was introduced in the general elections of 1951–52 for the first time in India. All political parties, including the Communist Party of India⁴ and the Hindu nationalist Jan Sangh, were authorized to participate in the election. Thanks to the extension of suffrage, the electorate rapidly expanded, bringing into the political arena many voters with no previous experience of electoral participation. Such a sudden induction of new voters could have been a recipe for disaster for parliamentary democracy and political order, particularly in conjunction with the violence that accompanied the Partition of India. But the subsequent career of parliamentary democracy, thanks to the continuity of the institutions of state and the structures of leader-constituent relations, saw parties and elections becoming an essential part of the political culture of post-Independence India. Voter turnout, spread over all social classes, has steadily increased.

The first General Election to the Lok Sabha was a veritable adventure into an experiment in popular democracy. This was the first time that a mammoth electorate of 173.2 million electors was going to the polls. The tasks of voter registration, identification and, finally, the conduct of the polls were all to be arranged by the independent Election Commission. Elections were to be conducted by men and women drawn from many different branches of the public services because no specialized bureaucracy had been foreseen by the Constitution for this purpose. The ballots had to be carted to far-flung polling stations, many located in remote areas not easy to access. Thanks to limited franchise under colonial rule, only a part of the electorate had previous polling experience but for the vast majority—such as those who could not meet the educational and property qualifications of restricted franchise under British rule, as well as people from the princely states voting for the first time—the election was a novel experience.

Finally, Nehru's India took the risk to lift the ban on communists and members of the Hindu right-wing, imposed respectively, after the violent uprising of peasants in Telangana led by communists and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a radical Hindu nationalist organization. The risk of permitting unfettered participation in the election to political forces of all ideological hues paid off handsomely in the form of an orderly and peaceful election, though with a rather modest turnout of 45.7 percent of the electorate. This has gone up to over 66 percent in the most recent general elections of 2014 (see Table 6.1).

Subsequent elections have maintained the largely peaceful character of the polling process through the deployment of the army to protect voters (disruption of elections is the main objective of some political groups opposed to the state) has become routine in recent elections. As such, Indian elections are now spread over several phases, lasting, in some cases, over weeks. Under the Constitution, elections to the popular houses—the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies—must be held every five years or less and that has been generally the case, except in 1976 when the term of the Lok Sabha was extended by one year because the Emergency, creating a gap of six years between the general elections of 1971 and 1977. Elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies were held simultaneously in the early elections but from the 1960s, the rhythm has been broken,

Table 6.1 Parliamentary elections, 1952–2014

Year	Seats	Candidates	Polling Stations	Electorate (in millions)	Votes Polled (in millions)	Turnout (%)
1952	489	1,874	132,560	173.2	79.1	45.7
1957	494	1,519	220,478	193.7	92.4	47.7
1962	494	1,985	238,355	217.7	120.6	55.4
1967	520	2,369	267,555	250.6	153.6	61.3
1971	518	2,784	342,944	274.1	151.6	55.3
1977	542	2,439	373,908	321.2	194.3	60.5
1980	529	4,629	434,742	363.9	202.7	56.9
1984	542	5,493	479,214	400.1	256.5	64.1
1989	529	6,160	579,810	498.9	309.1	62.0
1991	534	8,780	588,714	511.5	285.9	55.9
1996	543	13,952	767,462	592.6	343.3	57.9
1998	539	4,708	765,473	602.3	373.7	62.0
1999	543	4,648	774,651	619.5	371.7	60.0
2004	543	5,435	687,473	671.5	389.9	58.1
2009	543	8,070	828,804	716.0	407.4	56.9
2014	543	8,251	930,000	814.5	540.7	66.38

Source: Data Unit, (CSDS), Delhi and Election Commission India.

which, in a way, has enhanced the pressure on the accountability of the party in power. As one can see from the statistics of the 2014 parliamentary election, of an electorate of over 814 million (larger than the population of Europe), with about 551 million votes cast, India's elections have assumed gigantic proportions, and have earned an international reputation for being largely free and fair.

Since regular and frequent political consultation was designed to be the most effective instrument of political socialization, we need to examine indicators of political participation in the General Elections to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the federal legislature and the highest repository of legislative authority and governmental accountability in the country. These are illustrative of India's success at organizing an electoral process on a continental scale. Large-scale poverty and illiteracy notwithstanding, India, under the supervision of an independent Election Commission, has organized elections involving very large electorates who, by law, must be provided with polling booths within easy walking distance. The campaigns themselves are strictly monitored.⁵ It is not unusual for polling to be stopped and re-polling ordered in the event of electoral fraud or violence.⁶

General elections to the federal Parliament and its regional equivalent, the State Assemblies, and elections to popular bodies at the local level are crucial elements of policymaking, political recruitment, and inter-generational transition in India. The General Election of 1951–52 was the first time that a national electorate, the bulk of which had never voted before, took part in an election under 'universal adult franchise'. The right to vote for all, and a secure environment within which citizens can participate in polling freely, have now been generally established. Men tend to turn out in greater numbers than women, but the participation of women has grown over the years. An equally interesting phenomenon is the participation of *Dalits*—the former untouchable castes—and the 'minority community'—and Indian euphemism for Muslims. It is a significant achievement considering, respectively, the oppressive exclusion of the lowest social strata by upper castes in the past, and the recent history of Partition which

saw a large-scale exodus of the Muslim upper and middle classes and political leadership, particularly in North India, which left the lower social groups, and ‘Nationalist’ Muslims who had opposed the Partition of India on religious grounds, leaderless.

The level of participation in India’s parliamentary elections (see Table 6.1), which has stabilized around 60 percent (except in 2014 which, at 66 percent, recorded the highest voting in a national election for the first time), is lower than in the longer-established and more affluent democracies of Europe. There is, however, considerable regional variation in levels of participation. This is particularly visible in elections to the lower houses in the States. The national average of participation in these elections has also gone up from the modest 45 percent turnout of the first election to over 60 percent in more recent assembly elections. Electoral participation, a good indicator of political consciousness, is among the highest in the North-East. In the elections held during 2002–6, some of the States—such as Manipur (90.2 percent), Nagaland (87.9 percent), Mizoram (78.7 percent), Tripura (78.7 percent) and Assam (75.7 percent)—produced spectacular results. Some other States have developed traditions of high participation because of factors specific to them. Thus, the skills of the Left Front coalition in West Bengal at mobilizing their electors contributed to the high participation rate of around 80 percent in recent assembly elections. Puducherry—a former French colony called Pondicherry until its renaming in 2006 as Puducherry—and Goa, a former Portuguese colony, each has a rate of participation higher than the national average. Even in strife-torn Kashmir—a politically conscious electorate turns out in large numbers when conditions return to a semblance of normality. However, participation has remained low in some parts of India such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, and not higher than the national average in richer States of India such as Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Still, even in low-participation States, the right to vote is seen as a part of empowerment by the poor and underprivileged.

India’s 2014 general elections: a critical realignment in Indian politics?

India’s sixteenth general elections resulted in what most have agreed was a decimation of the country’s Grand Old Party, the Indian National Congress (INC) and a resounding victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).⁷ The election results were significant for several reasons. In the history of India’s Lok Sabha—the powerful lower house of the Parliament—no political party other than the INC has managed to win a majority on its own nor has any political party succeeded in achieving a majority on its own in the Lok Sabha during the past three decades. For the BJP, the sixteenth general elections marked its emergence as a truly national party (making gains and breakthroughs across the country). The elections delivered a mandate for a strong, unified government based on a clear majority. This marked a break with the trend since 1984 of coalition governments formed because of unwieldy alliances, either the INC-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) or the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The voter turnout for the 2014 elections at 66.4 percent marks a peak as seen in the table below and is most comparable with one previous election, that of 1984 which marked the second highest peak (after 2014) in the country’s history, with a turnout of over 66 percent. When compared with the previous election of 1980, this was a jump of 7.2 percent. In the recent Lok Sabha elections, the jump was even larger at 9.48 percent, between 2009 and 2014. This suggests that in the years of 1984 and 2014 the electorate

felt more compelled than usual to vote. This can be explained as a consequence of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination, which occurred on October 31, 1984 and the subsequent outpouring of sympathy for the Congress party and her son, Rajiv Gandhi who contested the 1984 elections held soon thereafter.

While the high 1984 turnout can be clarified in terms of context and contingency, the 2014 elections are unusual for the fact that it was a normal election, taking place within the electoral cycle but which nonetheless elicited a mass response. Turnout in 2014 was significant according to various parameters including regions⁸ (with increases recorded across the country), gender (male and female turnout was recorded at a historic high),⁹ age (the Election Commission noted that those States with the highest number of young voters registered, recorded the greatest increase in voter turnout). Highly urban seats recorded the lowest turnout (61.1 percent) as in previous elections but the Election Commission data highlights the fact that the percentage point increase in turnout was much higher in urban seats compared with semi-urban and rural seats, suggesting that there was greater participation than usual by middle and upper-class voters in cities.¹⁰ These figures can be explained by way of the anti-incumbency effect with voter outrage mounting in response to a series of corruption scandals, each bigger than the other that rocked the UPA government. Investigations revealed the misallocation and misuse of the nation's resources, exposed tainted ministers in the central government. An economic downturn, with a slowing economy, a falling Rupee, skyrocketing inflation and limited corrective action taken by the government in response to the scandals, added to widespread dissatisfaction.

It is possible that 2014 also represented the effect of a greater social and political awareness, raised in the wake of popular campaigns such as Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement of 2011, the subsequent emergence of the activist, Aam Admi Party as well as the massive public protests the 2012 Delhi gang rape that shocked the country. All these are crucial contextual factors that help understand why the electorate voted so conclusively against the sitting government. However, this casts more emphasis on explaining why the Congress lost and does not help to understand how the BJP managed to win such a decisive victory, especially given the fact that many observers expected regional parties to be the prime beneficiaries of the Congress' defeat.¹¹ To further strengthen this point, we turn to a short overview and comparison of the INC and BJP's own election histories.

Vote shares and swings

Elections in India, based on first past the post electoral rules, operating in large, single member constituencies with usually multi-caste and often multi-religious populations have generally led to political moderation on the part of competing parties. The Congress party, which, as one can see from the tables below, was for a long time the dominant force in Indian politics and was able to transform a minority of votes to a majority of seats in the early elections—thanks to a divided opposition. However, that was no longer possible towards the end of the 1960s in State legislative elections and from 1977, in parliamentary elections because in the meantime, the idea of political coalitions—an efficient method of transforming votes to seats—had become common currency among parties opposed to the Congress party. Its inability to come to terms with this new development cost its electoral prospects dearly as one can see from the electoral outcomes in the 1990s. The Congress party eventually learnt to play the

Table 6.2 Lok Sabha elections, 1952–2014 (seats and percentage of votes)

<i>Party</i>	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984
INC	364 45.0	371 47.8	361 44.7	283 40.8	352 43.7	154 34.5	353 42.7	415 48.0
BJS/BJP ¹²	3 3.1	4 5.9	14 6.4	35 9.4	22 7.4	— —	— —	2 7.4
<i>Party</i>	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014
INC	197 39.5	244 36.6	140 28.8	141 25.8	114 28.3	145 26.5	206 28.6	44 19.3
BJS/BJP	86 11.5	120 20.0	161 20.3	182 25.6	182 23.8	138 22.2	116 18.8	282 31.0

Data Source: Data Unit, CSDS, Delhi and Election Commission India.

coalitional game and was rewarded for its efforts in the parliamentary elections of 2004 when Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister, leading the UPA coalition, consisting of 13 parties. In 2009, the Congress greatly improved its seat share leading to a second round of the UPA coalition government.

Traditionally, the social base of the Congress party cut across all social groups and cleavages of India, making it India's quintessential catch-all party. The Hindu nationalist BJP presented a sharp contrast. Initially, it was very much a party of the 'Hindu-Hindi-belt', the north Indian Gangetic plains. During its rapid rise to power, the party drew on the desire of many Hindus to see a more prominent role for Hindu culture within the institutions of the secular state and to deny privileged treatment to minorities, such as a special status for the Muslim majority State of Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP came to power riding the crest of Hindu nationalism and promising to build a temple for Lord Rama in the city of Ayodhya in the State of Uttar Pradesh on the same spot where the sixteenth-century *Babri Masjid* (Mosque of Babur) stood.

For the BJP, 1989 is perhaps comparable to 2014 in the scale of victory and loss that it entailed. As seen above in Table 6.2, the BJP was catapulted from just 2 seats in 1984 to 85 seats in 1989. The Congress was reduced to 197 seats from its whopping majority of 415 in 1984. In our opinion, 1989 marks the watershed, after which Congress found it increasingly difficult to translate votes into seats. Thereafter, with an average vote share of 27.7 percent over the next seven general elections, the Congress was unable to gain a majority. In contrast, in 2014 with 31 percent of the votes, the BJP managed to win almost 52 percent of the seats in the Lok Sabha. As has been pointed out, this meant that in technical terms the BJP was highly efficient in translating votes into seats.¹³ In fact, if one examines the table, between 1989 and 1998 the BJP got better at this, gaining seats despite relatively small changes in its vote share.

Following the downward swing in the vote / seat ratio in 2004 and 2009, it is necessary to investigate whether in 2014 the BJP simply benefitted from the incumbency effect, coming after the effete leadership of the UPA, in power for ten years, particularly during the run-up to the election and the unintended result of long-term Congress decline or whether the BJP changed its electoral strategy in terms of contesting and winning seats. As Table 6.3 shows, between the elections of 2009 and 2014, the BJP made significant inroads into several States including, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh,

Table 6.3 State-wise vote swings: BJP and the Indian National Congress: 2009 and 2014

States	BJP (Seats won, % of vote)			INC (Seats won, % of vote)		
	2009	2014	Vote Swing (%)	2009	2014	Vote Swing (%)
Uttar Pradesh	10 (18.46%)	71 (42.32%)	23.86%	21 (18.25%)	2 (7.47%)	-10.78%
Maharashtra	9 (18.17%)	23 (27.32%)	9.15%	17 (19.61%)	2 (18.13%)	-1.48%
Bihar	12 (13.93%)	22 (29.38%)	15.45%	2 (10.26%)	2 (8.42%)	-1.84%
West Bengal	1 (6.15%)	2 (16.84%)	10.69%	6 (13.45%)	4 (9.58%)	-3.87%
Madhya Pradesh	16 (43.44%)	27 (54.03%)	10.59%	12 (40.14%)	2 (34.89%)	-5.25%
Tamil Nadu	0 (2.34%)	1 (5.47%)	3.13%	8 (15.03%)	0 (4.31%)	-10.72%
Rajasthan	4 (36.57%)	25 (54.94%)	18.37%	20 (47.19%)	0 (30.36%)	-16.83%
Karnataka	19 (41.63%)	17 (43.01%)	1.38%	6 (37.65%)	9 (40.81%)	3.16%
Gujarat	15 (46.52%)	26 (59.05%)	12.53%	11 (43.38%)	0 (32.86%)	-10.52%
Andhra Pradesh	0 (1.46%)	2 (7.18%)	5.72%	21 (40.71%)	0 (2.84%)	-37.87%
Odisha	0 (16.88%)	1 (21.54%)	4.66%	6 (32.75%)	0 (25.98%)	-6.77%
Telangana	— (10.37%)	1 —	—	— (24.48%)	2 —	—
Kerala	0 (6.31%)	0 (10.33%)	4.02%	13 (40.13%)	8 (31.10%)	-9.03%
Jharkhand	8 (27.53%)	12 (40.11%)	12.58%	1 (15.02%)	0 (13.28%)	-1.74%
Assam	4 (16.21%)	7 (36.51%)	20.3%	7 (34.88%)	3 (29.61%)	-5.27%
Punjab	1 (10.07%)	2 (8.74%)	-1.33%	8 (45.23%)	3 (33.05%)	-12.18%

Data Source: CSDS National Election Study Statistics, *Economic & Political Weekly*, September 27, 2014 and Election Commission for 2009 data.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Assam, going well beyond its traditional ambit. Furthermore, by gaining single seats in the cases of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha, the BJP won an important symbolic victory, marking its presence in States where it previously had none. The Congress, on the other hand, did not simply continue a gradual decline in vote and seat share in a number of States but was actually decimated, for instance, in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

If one further disaggregates survey data about voting behaviour among social groups (see Table 6.4), the evidence for a critical shift becomes even stronger. Not only did the BJP strengthen its position amongst its traditional voter base of Upper and Middle Classes as well as the Upper Castes, but in 2014 it managed to dramatically increase its appeal amongst the lower classes, the poor, the Other Backward Castes, Scheduled Castes and Tribes—key constituents of the Congress party's traditional social base.

Table 6.4 Vote share (%): INC and BJP among different social groups (2009–2014)

Party	BJP			INC		
	Year	2009 (%)	2014 (%)	Change (%)	2009 (%)	2014 (%)
Upper Class	25	38	13	32	17	-15
Middle Class	22	32	10	30	20	-10
Lower Class	19	31	12	29	19	-10
Poor	16	24	8	27	20	-7
Upper Caste	21	47	26	26	13	-13
OBC	19	34	15	24	15	-9
SC	11	24	13	27	19	-8
ST	23	38	15	39	28	-11

Data Source: NES 2009 and NES 2014, (CSDS, Delhi).

Three aspects are considered in the following section: the role of Narendra Modi, the BJP's electoral agenda and the strategy behind the 2014 campaign. Each is used to explore and highlight the tactical decision-making that occurred within the BJP during the build-up to the elections and thus to shed light on the organisational capacities of the BJP as a political party.

The BJP: readjustment and reorientation

Unlike any other election before in India, 2014 marked a contest between two individuals, Narendra Modi, and Rahul Gandhi. Both became emblems for their respective political parties and symbolised contrasting personal styles as well as political cultures. The media and political campaigns focused heavily on both personas to the extent that the election came to be presidential in style. Rahul Gandhi, scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family, tried to convey that he was in politics through choice and conviction, with a plan to rejuvenate the Congress party. However, he ultimately failed to convince critics and voters.¹⁴ In contrast, Narendra Modi carried the message that ambition, sustained political engagement and a strategy can lead to success despite the odds. Having worked his way up through the party's hierarchy, Modi personified achievements based on merit, a role model that resounded with the aspirational mentalities of young voters across the country and the expanding, emerging middle classes.¹⁵ Thus, the two candidates came to represent and were depicted as opposing contrasts, dynasty versus merit, one born into India's foremost political family, the other a son of a petty grocer's family who worked with his father, selling tea at a railway station in Gujarat.¹⁶

During the campaign, Narendra Modi toured the length and breadth of the country. According to the BJP's records, he addressed 437 public rallies with another 1,000-plus rallies using 3D technology. Imitating a town hall style of outreach, Modi invented and introduced the '*chai pe charcha*' ('chat over tea') during which people could interact with him directly. In contrast, Rahul Gandhi appeared much less frequently in public and was often filmed talking to very specific groups of people, for example, the occasion in Varanasi where rickshaw-pullers and auto-rickshaw drivers were invited to question and contribute to the Congress party's election manifesto. While Modi appeared to reach out to the masses at large, Rahul Gandhi's targeted campaigning gave the impression of focusing on traditional, secure pro-Congress voting groups.

In his campaign speeches, Modi built on his achievements as Gujarat Chief Minister and what it took to be an effective administrator.¹⁷ Also, in January, Rahul Gandhi, gave a rare televised interview with the news anchor, Arnab Goswami in which he constantly referred to himself in the third person.¹⁸ Both leaders were mocked and criticised for their comments, but Narendra Modi managed to project himself as a strong leader while Rahul Gandhi reinforced his image as distant, aloof and far removed from the thick of Indian politics.

Nonetheless, the nomination of Narendra Modi as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate was not a foregone conclusion. Modi was a controversial candidate outside the party as well as within the BJP. On the one hand, Gujarat showcased the Chief Minister's achievements as a reformer and projected his ability to deliver on promises of economic development. On the other hand, Modi's failure as Chief Minister of the State to stop the killing of Muslim citizens in his own State during the Gujarat riots of 2002 in Godhra made him a disputed and divisive figure. As a candidate, he was likely to add fuel to the fire of critics who questioned the BJP's commitment to secular values underpinning the Constitution of India. Sceptics argued that Modi's 'model of development' illustrated the danger of focusing solely on economic growth without premising welfare on equality and communal harmony. After months of inner-party negotiations, it was only on September 14, 2013, that the announcement was made, naming Narendra Modi as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. L.K. Advani, the party's veteran leader refused to endorse the decision and did not attend the BJP parliamentary board meeting at which the nomination was accepted, making public his protest against the selection of Modi.

Announcing a prime ministerial candidate as the BJP did in September 2013 was unusual in Indian politics where prime ministers are usually declared *after* elections have been won. The move proved to be a strategic masterstroke for several reasons. In November, Modi campaigned in four State assembly elections (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Delhi) where the BJP did very well, thus enhancing his popularity beyond that of his home State, Gujarat. Various opinion polls reported that with Modi's growing popularity, the election was turning into a plebiscite on him and it has been suggested that many people voted for the BJP due to the 'Modi factor'.¹⁹ By late November, Modi had also made an impact on the international scene as was evident with the Goldman Sachs report, "Modi-fying our View: raise India to Market-weight"²⁰ which announced that it was revising its projections for the Indian economy based on the probability of a BJP-led alliance forming the next government. With stock markets rallying in December, further gains made in the wake of the March announcement of the upcoming poll dates and the rupee's recovery against the dollar (from a record low of 68.85 per dollar on August 28, 2013 to a high of 69.95 in March 2014) analysts and forecasters across the country began to speak of a 'Modi wave'.

The manifesto: good governance and Hindutva

After much suspense, the BJP manifesto was released on April 7, coming some hours *after* voting had started in the nine-phased 2014 election. Officially, the delay was attributed to the party leaders' tight campaign schedule. However, various analysts quoted sources that Narendra Modi had been dissatisfied with the manifesto drafted by the BJP stalwart and party ideologue, Murli Manohar Joshi.²¹ The original version at 60 pages

long, it was said, reflected the traditional BJP mix of *Hindutva*—an evocative term that blends Hindu values, identity and community—and *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) ideology. In 2004 and 2009 this had been the case in both BJP manifestos, which contained substantial references to and discussions about Hindutva and its underlying philosophy of Integral Humanism. The 2009 BJP manifesto went as far as to pronounce a ‘Hindu world view’, openly extolled the Ayodhya movement which, under the leadership of L.K. Advani, was depicted as, ‘the biggest mass movement in India since Independence and (which) initiated a powerful debate on cultural nationalism and the true meaning of secularism’.²²

The apparently last minute, re-drafted manifesto in 2014 carried instead, Modi’s message and priorities of stimulating economic growth, agricultural development and individual empowerment. At the National Executive Meeting, Modi had referred to a “5Ts” approach to create a “Brand India” based on talent, tradition, tourism, trade and technology. This was replicated in the 2014 manifesto and elaborated with specific goals envisioned and strategies and policies to be implemented. Thus, the central slogan “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” (“Participation of all, Development for all”) carried the day with more traditional BJP and Hindutva issues like the Ram Mandir, Article 370 and the Uniform Civil Code, relegated to a less prominent place or addressed in less strident language in the manifesto.

Thus, on Article 370, which grants special rights and greater autonomy to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the 2014 manifesto contained the following sentence: “the BJP reiterates its stand on the Article 370, and will discuss this with all stakeholders and remains committed to the abrogation of this article”.²³ While the BJP has long argued for abrogation of Article 370 in the name of greater national integration, the 2014 manifesto deviated from its previous position by mentioning the need for discussion and dialogue on the matter. On the subject of the Ram Mandir, which the BJP has in the past vowed to rebuild, the 2014 manifesto stated that the “BJP reiterates its stand to explore all possibilities within the framework of the constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya”.²⁴ Placing the matter in the context of the constitution marks a change from past language and justifications used, a move away from transcendental references, such as in 2009, to ‘the desire of the people in India and abroad to have a grand temple at the birthplace of Sri Ram in Ayodhya’²⁵ and instead a rhetoric based on the transactional realities of politics. On the Uniform Civil Code, the only difference was the positioning of the topic with it being moved down to the manifesto’s last point. The statement remained the same as in 2009:

Article 44 of the constitution of India lists Uniform Civil Code as one of the Directive Principles of state policy. BJP believes that there cannot be gender equality till such time India adopts a Uniform Civil Code, which protects the rights of all women, and the BJP reiterates its stand to draft a Uniform Civil Code, drawing upon the best traditions and harmonizing them with the modern times.

The campaign, candidates and constituencies

Aside from the role played by Modi, credit must be given to the organisational capacity and strategic calculation that was at work during the BJP’s campaign. When discussing Lok Sabha elections, the State of Uttar Pradesh (UP) deserves attention given that it is the country’s biggest State in terms of population and sends the largest number of

lawmakers to the Lok Sabha. Although the BJP had already been successful in Uttar Pradesh during the 1998 and 1999 general elections, in 2014 it managed to garner a staggering 71 out of the total 80 seats. Once again, the scale of the BJP's victory is noteworthy, especially in a State where the election was a four-way contest between two entrenched, regional parties, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) as well as the national parties, the Congress and the BJP.²⁶

The role of Mr Amit Shah, an ally of Mr Modi within the BJP, was a key element in the UP story, given that he ultimately emerged as the State's campaign coordinator and was subsequently rewarded for his success by being appointed BJP party President in July 2014. A close ally and aide of Narendra Modi, Amit Shah was a Gujarat-based politician and not the BJP's immediate choice for campaign manager. In fact, BJP party president, Rajnath Singh had appointed Ramapati Ram Tripathi as head of its election management committee. Nevertheless, by 12 June 2013, four days after the BJP's National Executive Meeting in Goa, Amit Shah took over the BJP's Uttar Pradesh campaign.

In a rare interview, given to the Caravan magazine in January 2014, Shah revealed that he had studied closely and identified the main weaknesses in the State as, "voter disenchantment" with the reigning SP and "multiplicity of authority" in the State government.²⁷ The SP patriarch, Mulayam Singh Yadav, wielding power through his son, sitting Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav, and numerous other competing party leaders was causing confusion and contradictions in policy-making. These weaknesses were to be exploited by highlighting the decisiveness and clarity in BJP leadership and showcasing the need for, and promise of, development. Focusing the party's organisational capacities at the booth level, in each of the 140,000 polling stations in UP's 80 parliamentary constituencies, Shah aimed at strengthening the BJP's election machinery. Booth workers were identified as the crucial link, spreading Modi's message, collecting important information for the campaign and mobilising ground forces for turnout on voting day as well as at election rallies. Shah also reportedly played a direct role in candidate selection, focusing entirely on the person's *ability* to win and the *likelihood* of winning.

The campaign in UP also illustrates the role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which supported the BJP with organisational manpower and infrastructure. In the BJP's UP campaign there were hard-line politicians like Kalyan Singh, Uma Bharti and Yogi Adityanath,²⁸ and communalism did become an issue for instance in the Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts where the BJP officially fielded three candidates accused of fanning Hindu-Muslim riots in September 2013. However, it did not turn into the party's general UP campaign message or strategy.

Uttar Pradesh became an additional, attention-grabbing electoral battleground given that Rahul Gandhi was contesting from the family seat of Amethi and Modi decided to stand from Varanasi (both in UP), in addition to his old constituency in Gujarat. This decision also brought Modi into direct confrontation with the BJP's sitting candidate, Murli Manohar Joshi a powerful figure within the RSS. Nonetheless, by late February 2014 members of the RSS were reportedly advising the RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat that Modi ought to contest the parliamentary seat even though Joshi had started to distribute publicity material for himself in the city. Ultimately, Joshi did stand down, indicating another victory for the Modi-camp over the old guard within the BJP. As a candidate from Varanasi, Modi galvanised the UP campaign further in addition to reaping the symbolic capital of contesting and ultimately winning from Hinduism's holiest city.

Despite projections that the BJP and Narendra Modi would lead to communal tensions, expose and exploit deep societal cleavages as well as provoke a polarisation in Indian politics, the BJP held on to its ‘development’ theme, and the electorate delivered one of the most stable and encompassing mandates to date. Rather than caste, community or creed, the message and promise of economic development resonated across the country, making it the first election in the history of Indian politics, to be won on a primarily, pro-growth agenda. As illustrated above, the BJP’s decisions in the 2014 campaign indicate important changes in power relations within the party (a change of guard and generational shift amongst its leaders). Furthermore, as the UP campaign exemplified and the nation-wide campaign confirmed, the BJP followed a strategy that focused less on highlighting social cleavages and more on expanding its voter base through the issues of governance and development.

The story of Uttar Pradesh highlights the gains made thanks to a multipolar contest, which split the votes to the benefit of the BJP and its allies (a similar pattern occurred in Bihar). In several States multipolar contests gave way to a BJP majority thanks to tactical voting by voters who aimed for a stable government at the centre. At the same time, the BJP was also successful in bipolar contests in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. To explain why and how the BJP appeared successfully to compete across a range of scenarios, it is helpful to return to strategy as an explanation. In an article analysing the fate of regional parties in the 16th Lok Sabha elections, K. K. Kailash has pointed out that the BJP adjusted its campaign in accordance with the regional/regionalist agenda of potential competitors in each State.²⁹ Hence in Maharashtra the BJP focused on a national agenda rather than the Shiv Sena’s ‘sons of the soil’ programme whilst in other States, such as Andhra Pradesh and Punjab, the BJP emphasized the legacy of local leaders and regional concerns about state–centre relations. As a result, “the BJP party effectively used the strategy of blurring particular dimensions on the agenda of the regionalist party while highlighting the other aspects to gain a tactical advantage”.³⁰

Following the 2014 parliamentary elections, the BJP-led NDA won a string of assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir. However, this trend was arrested in Delhi assembly elections in which the BJP could win only three seats compared to 67 for the nascent Aam Admi Party (AAP) which had barely marked its transformation from an anti-corruption social movement to a political party, despite winning 32.2 percent of the popular votes, compared to 54.3 percent cast in favour of the AAP. In retrospect, this was the first indication of a national anti-BJP coalition of political parties which, as we will see below, worked out to devastating effect in the Bihar assembly elections. The setback that the BJP got in the Bihar Assembly elections that closely followed its Delhi debacle (Table 6.5) showed how effective popular elections can be in holding political parties accountable, and responsive to regional and local conditions. A detailed analysis of the Bihar assembly elections shows the regional variation of Indian politics and limits of the electoral strategy of the BJP. In addition, it also shows the resilience of party-cleavage links that endure in time, linkages that can be mobilised by a capable and imaginative leader to great electoral gains.

Table 6.5 shows how the components of the UPA were more effective than the members of the NDA coalition in transforming votes to seats. On its own, the BJP could do well in the constituencies which it contested. However, its total strength was drastically below that of its rival—the NDAS. In terms of effective strength, the coalition led by the BJP (BJP, LJP, HAM and the RLSP) got a total of 58 seats, whereas the coalition

Table 6.5 Results of Bihar assembly elections (2015)

<i>Party</i>	<i>Vote Share %</i>	<i>Seats (in absolute numbers and as percentage of the total)</i>
Bharatiya Janata Party	24.4	53 (21.8)
Indian National Congress	6.7	27 (11.1)
Janata Dal (United)	16.8	71 (29.2)
Lok Jan Shakti Party	4.8	2 (0.8)
Rashtriya Janata Dal	18.4	80 (32.9)
Rashtriya Lok Samta Party	2.6	2 (0.8)
Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation)	1.5	3 (1.2)
Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular)	2.3	1 (0.4)
Independent	9.4	4 (1.6)
Total	100	243 (100)

Source: Election Commission of India <http://eciresults.nic.in/> 11.11.2015.

led by Nitish Kumar (JD (U), RJD and the INC) got a total of 178 seats. The so-called grand alliance (*mahagathbandhan*) led by the ruling Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was allied with one-time rival and former chief minister of Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), in what some described as a ‘desperate gamble to stay in power’. The Congress, too, was part of the alliance. On the opposite side was the NDA alliance led by the BJP and comprising three other parties: Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM). Going by the results of the 2014 elections, Bihar should have been an easy victory for the NDA alliance. In 2014, despite Nitish Kumar having snapped his ties with the NDA over the nomination of Modi as the BJP’s prime ministerial candidate, the BJP-led alliance, without HAM which had not yet come into existence, won 31 of the 40 seats. In contrast, the JD(U) and the RJD, which contested separately, won two and four seats respectively. In addition, the Congress, which was in alliance with the RJD, won two seats. Importantly, however, the combined vote in 2014 of the JD(U), RJD and Congress was 45 percent compared to the BJP-led alliance’s 38 percent. It is the coming together of the JD(U) and RJD which has changed the electoral outcome and made the election in Bihar much closer than it might have been.

The reason why the elections were predicted as a close one was because of how caste loyalties, always a critical factor in Bihar, worked out for the two opposing coalitions. The JD(U) and the RJD are both parties that bank heavily on lower caste or Other Backward Classes (OBC) voters, who constitute 51 percent of the state’s population. The Yadavs, who account for 15 percent of Bihar’s populations form Laloo’s core base, while the Kurmis and Koeris, who are roughly 12 percent of the state’s populations, have backed Nitish in the past. This has been reflected in the distribution of tickets. Nearly 55 percent of the grand alliance’s candidates are OBCs. According to the CSDS-Lokniti survey, the Yadavs and Kurmi-Koeris would back the grand alliance in large numbers. In addition, the grand alliance was strong among the Muslims, who constitute around 17 percent of Bihar’s population. This is consistent with the findings of the 2014 National Election Studies’ (NES) post-poll survey which shows that 84 percent of Muslim voters in Bihar voted for the RJD, JD(U) or the Congress.

In contrast, the BJP which is traditionally seen as an upper caste party had over 40 percent upper caste candidates contesting the election. The CSDS-Lokniti survey

found strong support for the NDA among the higher castes: Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs. But what had really tilted the balance in favour of the NDA was its support among the Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Dalits. Though factors like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat in mid-September questioning reservations or quotas for lower castes have had BJP leaders worried, they might not end up doing too much damage to the BJP. The CSDS-Lokniti survey predicted NDA likely to get 55 percent of the Dalit vote compared to 32 percent for the Grand Alliance. This was largely due to the BJP's partners in the NDA—the LJP, RSLP and HAM—who all had significant support among the Dalits. According to the CSDS-Lokniti survey, the NDA also had considerable support among the lower end of the OBCs, or the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs). Indeed, findings from the 2014 NES post-poll survey showed that the EBC vote in Bihar swung heavily in favour of the BJP during the national elections.

In a major blow to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) failed to win power in Bihar. The grand alliance (*mahagatbandhan*) led by two rivals-turned-allies, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav, won what was the most eagerly-watched elections in India in 2015. The grand alliance, which also included the Congress, won 178 of 243 seats in the Bihar Assembly compared to only 58 for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In terms of vote share, the grand alliance won 42 percent to the NDA's 34 percent.³¹

While the BJP has sought to downplay the Bihar result as not representing a mid-term referendum on the central government and Prime Minister Modi, its impact was to be felt nationally. A primary reason for this was the BJP's strategy of making Mr Modi the face of the party campaign in the month-long, five-phase Bihar election. Also huge sums were pledged for Bihar's development. Indeed, no Indian Prime Minister had campaigned so extensively for an Assembly election, and it was Mr Modi and the BJP President Amit Shah who dominated election hoardings in Bihar. The aura of invincibility around Mr Modi, which had been punctured in the 2015 Delhi Assembly elections, was breached. This was to have ramifications for the government's reform agenda.

To counter the formidable voter base of the grand alliance and restrictions of its own upper-caste base, the BJP allied with parties such as the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RSLP) and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) whose primary support comes from the Dalits or former untouchables and OBC groups like the Kushwahas. The BJP contested 160 seats, while the LJP, RSLP and HAM contested 40, 23 and 20 seats respectively. The NDA tried to replicate the 'coalition of extremes', which had served it well during the 2014 elections. This strategy aimed at getting votes from the two extremes—the upper castes and those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, namely the EBCs and the Dalits—and was successful in 2014. This plan, however, failed in 2015. According to CSDS-Lokniti, while the NDA won 84 percent of the upper-caste vote it could win only 43 percent of the EBC vote and 30 percent of the Mahadalit (the poorest among the Dalits) vote. The BJP thus ended up winning a lion's share of the NDA's seats—53 of the 58 seats—while its three allies could only win five.

If the caste arithmetic and opposition unity adversely affected the NDA, controversial statements by Sangh Parivar (saffron brotherhood) leaders and incidents of intolerance elsewhere in India did not help matters. There were two that were picked up by the grand alliance. The first was the lynching in end-September 2015 by a Hindu mob of a Muslim man in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly eating beef. This was followed by controversial remarks by BJP leaders who said the incident was an accident and that it was

not the sole responsibility of the Hindu community to maintain peace. In fact, the BJP made cow protection a crucial part of its Bihar campaign, particularly during the final phases of the election. The second was the statement by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat in September calling for a review of caste-based reservations. While the CSDS-Lokniti did not find any definitive evidence that these two events swayed the voters, the grand alliance leaders ensured that both these issues figured prominently in their election campaign.

To make things worse, the BJP leaders, including Mr Modi himself, did not get the tone of their campaign right. In speech after speech, he talked of Bihar as one of the most backward States whereas the popular sentiment among voters was that Bihar had done quite well under Mr Nitish Kumar. During the election campaign, Mr Modi changed tack and his speeches took on caste and religious overtones. The change in emphasis from an aspirational message to caste and communal issues was rejected by Bihar's voters. Mr Shah, who oversaw the party's campaign in Bihar, perhaps struck the most discordant note when in end-October he declared that "crackers will go off in Pakistan" if the grand alliance was voted to power. This was a gratuitous reference to the strong Muslim support for the grand alliance.

There was also an economic factor at play with soaring prices of pulses becoming an important electoral issue. The CSDS-Lokniti found that 40 percent of Bihar's voters felt that the central government was to blame for the price rise. There was a question mark too on the BJP's strategy of not naming a chief ministerial candidate for Bihar. This had worked in the states of Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand where the BJP won in 2014 either on its own or in an alliance. A crucial difference from Bihar, however, was that the opposition in those states had not named a chief ministerial candidate. In contrast, from the time the grand alliance was formed, Mr Nitish Kumar was projected as the chief ministerial candidate.

The Bihar election verdict has made it clear that the BJP's strategy of banking on Prime Minister Modi, without the backing of strong local leadership and organisation, to win Assembly elections is unlikely to work. Bihar's impact will be felt in State elections in 2016 in Kerala, Assam, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu and in the Union Territory of Puducherry. In none of these States, except for Assam, the BJP stood a realistic chance of doing well. The Bihar result thus affected the BJP's already slim prospects in these states. The real test for the BJP became the 2017 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state and one where the party won a quarter of its seats in the 2014 national elections.

The Bihar results diminished the prospects of the BJP significantly increasing its strength in the upper house of parliament, where the party is in a minority. An energised opposition, which had a majority in the upper house, sensed the opportunity to delay crucial legislation such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill or amendments to land acquisition. It was also likely to bring up in parliament the incidents of intolerance that occurred in the run-up to the Bihar elections. The central government attempted to find its way around parliament's intransigence by resorting to executive orders. Soon after the Bihar election results, Mr Modi sent a message to investors by opening several sectors, including banking, construction, defence and the media, to foreign investment. But these measures might not be enough to satisfy voters who are holding the Prime Minister and his party to account on the huge expectations that they had generated in 2014. These specific aspects of party politics and electoral competition will next be considered with reference to the party system of India as a whole.

The party system

Elections and political parties generate a tandem effect between them: one tends to reinforce the other, the former, generating issues and new political actors, the latter, inducting both into the political agenda and merging political competition with office seeking, taming extremists and imposing a semblance of order on potential chaos. The introduction of a limited franchise by the colonial government towards the end of the nineteenth century had spurred political competition for seats, leading to the mobilization of the electorate on communal lines. This had an important legacy for post-independence Indian politics.

The party system of contemporary India is the result of the six decades of growth under British rule prior to Independence. It is a complex system, which is, in fact, the aggregation of many regional political arenas. The electoral landscape had been long dominated by the Indian National Congress, since 1885 when it was set up whose evolution would be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Hindu nationalism which had made its first appearance in the early years of the twentieth century, really came into its own in the 1980s. Just as the Congress appears to have reached its nadir in the 2014 parliamentary elections, Hindu nationalism appears to have reached its peak, with the BJP as the core of the ruling coalition in the Centre, and as the core of the ruling coalitions in half of the States of the Indian Union. The communist movement has also had its glory days—as the first elected (though short-lived) communist government of the world in Kerala in 1957, and the ruling coalition in West Bengal for over three decades—has now become a relatively marginal force in Indian politics. Powerful regional parties dominate States like Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. On the top of this diversity, there are political groups in Kashmir, the North-East that are opposed to democratic party competition altogether. That is also the case of Naxalites—Indian Maoists—who play a complex tactical role in elections.

The picture becomes clearer if we divide the post-Independence period into the ‘one-dominant-party system’ period (1952–77) and its subsequent transformation into a multi-party system. The relative ease with which India developed electoral democracy and a competitive party system might appear puzzling to those unfamiliar with the pre-Independence record of the INC with regard to taking part in elections and its legacy of sharing ministerial office under the Government of India Act, 1935. The party, as one can see from Tables 6.6 and 6.7, was handsomely rewarded in the elections to the national parliament, thanks to the inheritance of the aura of pre-Independence prominence, and the efficiency of its party organization in candidate selection and getting the vote out.

Whether the individual should be the basis of political representation, or whether organic groups—religion, caste and ethnicity—should form the basis of representation and, as such, the exercise of power, is a question that had created heated debate among sections of Indians when the notion of restricted franchise was first mooted towards the end of the nineteenth century. The main leaders of the Congress Party, deeply schooled in Locke and Mill, had early on opted for the same norms of electoral representation as in the British Parliament with which they were familiar and which they much coveted. However, politicians from outside the faction of Hindu, upper-caste groups that dominated the Congress Party thought otherwise. They feared the double jeopardy of ‘tyranny of the majority’, and upper caste dominance which they suspected would be

Table 6.6 Lok Sabha elections, 1952–71 seats (and percent of vote)

Party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971
INC(I)	364 (45.0)	371 (47.8)	361 (44.7)	283 (40.8)	352 (43.7)
BJS/BJP	3 (3.1)	4 (5.9)	14 (6.4)	35 (9.4)	22 (7.4)
JP/JD	—	—	—	—	—
CPM	—	—	—	19 (4.4)	25 (5.1)
CPI	26 (3.3)	29 (8.9)	29 (9.9)	23 (5.0)	23 (4.7)
BKD/LD/SJP	—	—	—	—	1 (1.8)
INC (2)	—	—	—	—	16 (10.4)
Socialist	21 (16.4)	19 (10.4)	18 (9.5)	36 (8.0)	5 (3.4)
Swatantra	—	—	18 (7.9)	44 (8.7)	8 (3.1)
Regional parties	14 (14.1)	20 (6.2)	20 (8.9)	32 (9.1)	41 (8.4)
Independents	38 (15.9)	42 (19.4)	20 (11.1)	35 (13.7)	14 (8.4)
Others	23 (2.2)	9 (1.4)	14 (1.6)	13 (1.1)	11 (3.6)
Total	489	494	494	520	518

Data Source: Data Unit, CSDS (Delhi) and Election Commission India (2009).

Table 6.7a Lok Sabha elections, 1977–2009 seats (and percent of vote)

Party	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009
INC (I)	154 (34.5)	353 (42.7)	415 (48.0)	197 (39.5)	244 (36.6)	140 (28.8)	141 (25.8)	114 (28.3)	145 (26.5)	206 (28.6)
BJS/BJP	—	—	2 (7.4)	86 (11.5)	120 (20.0)	161 (20.3)	182 (25.6)	182 (23.8)	138 (22.2)	116 (18.8)
JP/JD/JD(U)	295 (41.3)	31 (19.0)	10 (6.7)	142 (17.7)	59 (10.8)	46 (8.1)	6 (3.2)	21 (3.1)	8 (2.4)	20 (—)
CPM	22 (4.3)	36 (6.1)	22 (5.7)	33 (6.5)	35 (6.1)	32 (6.1)	32 (5.2)	33 (5.4)	43 (5.7)	16 (5.3)
CPI	7 (2.8)	11 (2.6)	6 (2.7)	12 (2.6)	14 (2.5)	12 (2.0)	9 (1.8)	4 (1.5)	10 (1.4)	4 (1.4)
BKD/LD/SJP/	— (9.4)	41 (5.7)	3 —	— (3.3)	5 (2.9)	17 (0.1)	1 (0.1)	— (0.1)	— (0.1)	— (—)
JNP INC (2)	3 (1.7)	13 (5.3)	5 (1.6)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.4)	4 (1.5)	—	—	—	—
Regional parties	49 (8.8)	34 (7.7)	73 (13.3)	27 (10.5)	51 (13.3)	118 (20.6)	117 (24.2)	174 (32.0)	179 (33.4)	—
Independents	9 (5.5)	9 (6.4)	5 (8.1)	12 (5.3)	1 (3.9)	9 (6.3)	6 (3.2)	5 (2.6)	5 (4.3)	9 (5.2)
Others	3 (1.0)	1 (0.8)	1 (0.8)	19 (0.8)	4 (6.1)	4 (2.1)	49 (3.3)	10 (10.9)	15 (3.2)	— (4.0)
Total	542	529	542	529	534	543	543	543	543	543

Abbreviations: BJS-Bharatiya Jana Sangh; BJP-Bharatiya Janata Party; BKD-Bharatiya Kranti Dal; CPI-Communist Party of India; CPM-Communist Party of India (Marxist); INC (I)-Indian National Congress (-1967); Congress (Requisitionist) (1971); Congress (Indira) (1980); INC (2)-Congress (Organization); Congress (Urs) (1980); Congress (Socialist) (1984-); JD-Janata Dal; JP-Janata Party; LD-Lok Dal; SJP-Samajwadi Janata Party.

Note: The ‘Socialist’ category includes the Socialist Party, the Kisan Mazdoor Party, the Praja Socialist Party, and the Samyukta Socialist Party.

Data Source: Data Unit, CSDS (Delhi) and Election Commission India (2009).

Table 6.7b Lok Sabha elections, 2014 seats (and percent of vote)

<i>Coalition/Party</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>	<i>Seat Share</i>	<i>Vote Share</i>
National democratic alliance	336	61.82	
BJP	282	51.93	31
SHS	18	3.31	1.85
TDP	16	2.95	2.55
LJP	6	1.1	0.41
SAD	4	0.74	0.66
RLSP	3	0.55	0.19
AD	2	0.37	0.15
PMK	1	0.18	0.33
SWP	1	0.18	0.2
AINRC	1	0.18	0.05
NPP	1	0.18	0.1
NPF	1	0.18	0.18
United progressive alliance	60	11.04	
INC	44	8.1	19.31
NCP	6	1.1	1.56
RJD	4	0.74	1.34
IUML	2	0.37	0.2
JMM	2	0.37	0.3
KEC(M)	1	0.18	0.08
RSP	1	0.18	0.3
Other national/regional parties	147	27.06	
CPI	1	0.18	0.78
CPI(M)	9	1.66	3.25
AIADMK	37	6.81	3.27
AITMC	34	6.26	3.84
BJD	20	3.68	1.71
Independents	3	0.55	
Others	43	7.92	2.99
Total	543		

Data Source: Election Commission of India <http://eciresults.nic.in/PartyWiseResult.htm>.

the likely outcome of the introduction of electoral democracy based on majority rule in a society where caste and religion were the main basis of identity. Not surprisingly, political parties which drew their main support from among Muslims and the untouchable groups were keen on proportional representation, which they thought would be a safer basis for the protection of their interests and identities.

In the event, British policy makers were caught in a double bind—between majority voting rules that they were familiar with—and respect for minority rights, which entailed the adoption of proportional representation. However, leaders of the INC, even as they resented the adoption of proportional representation as the basis of a restricted franchise, participated in the elections under colonial rule, gaining in the process valuable experience of electioneering. The issue was finally settled through two fortuitous events. The Partition of India removed the Muslim League, which had been a main player in the Indian political arena and a trenchant advocate of proportional representation as the main competitor against the Congress Party. The second event was the famous Poona Pact of 1936 between Gandhi and Ambedkar—the celebrated leader of India's untouchable communities—who was one of the main advocates of proportional representation. The agreement finally led to the setting aside of a quota of seats for the untouchables, and subsequently for tribal communities, under a rule known as

'reservation of seats'. There were thus no obstacles to the principle of majority voting after Independence and the Representation of People Act of 1947 gave due recognition to this rule as the basis of all elections in India, except those to the Presidency and the upper house of the Central Parliament and State Legislatures.

India's electoral campaigns are an excellent demonstration of how political parties develop their strategies to reconcile elections based on single-member constituencies and franchise based on individual preferences, with the existence of castes, tribes and other groups based on collective identities. Factions, short-term alliances of individuals, and, increasingly, broad-based coalitions, comprising, in some cases, competing castes and political groups, are some of the consequences of this complex process of electoral mobilization. Elections and party competition have played a double role by empowering both individuals and groups, leading to the continuous creation of new groups and coalitions. The paradoxical co-existence of modern elections and caste alliances, and caste consciousness is yet another outcome of the process of electioneering.³²

Rather than inhibiting the growth of party competition, social conflict, interwoven with political conflict, deepens political partisanship. However, elections based on first-past-the-post electoral rules, operating in large, single-member constituencies which are usually multi-caste and often multi-religious in character, ultimately lead to political moderation on the part of competing parties. Elections with limited franchise under British rule had facilitated the political transition by acting as the institutional context in which power was transferred to elected Indian leaders. This experience had become an integral part of the culture and tradition of the Congress Party, which, as one can see from Table 6.2, was able to transform a minority of votes to most seats in the early elections—thanks to a divided opposition. However, that was no longer possible towards the end of the 1960s in State legislative elections and from 1977 in parliamentary elections, because in the meantime the idea of political coalitions—an efficient method of transforming votes into seats—had become common currency among parties opposed to the Congress Party. Its inability to come to terms with this new development cost its electoral prospects dearly, as one can see from the electoral outcomes in the 1990s. However, the Congress Party eventually learnt to play the coalitional game and was handsomely rewarded for its efforts in the parliamentary elections of 2004 when Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister, leading the UPA coalition consisting of 13 parties. After the 2009 election, Manmohan Singh as the leader of the UPA was invited by the President to form the government. The UPA coalition, which held together through the previous five years, once again showed its political acumen in terms of sharing out Cabinet posts among its allies and winning over temporary support when needed to maintain the requisite parliamentary majority.

After Independence, electoral competition accelerated the pace of social change, leading to a second phase of political change when the generation that participated in the Freedom Movement was replaced by younger leaders, many of whom came from upwardly mobile, newly enfranchised, lower social classes. The entry of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which enjoyed support from business and industry, professional and those with higher education and the Hindu upper social strata into government, brought these groups closer to power. All sections of Indian society thus secured links to the structure of power at one time or another, if not in the national arena, then at least in one or more regional governments. Drawing on survey data provides the basic information about the distribution of support to the main political parties across social formations. One can notice the differential support that political parties receive from social groups in Tables 6.8a and 6.8b.

Table 6.8a Social bases of political parties (1996–2004) (in percent)

Background	1996				2004					
Characteristics	INC+	BJP+	NF	IF	BSP	UPA	NDA	LF	BSP	SP+
All-India average	27.5	24.9	10.1	7.5	3.4	39.5	37.9	6.4	5.0	5.4
Gender										
Female	27.6	23.0	9.4	7.6	3.1	40.4	37.1	7.0	5.0	5.1
Male	27.4	26.8	10.8	7.4	3.6	38.8	38.5	5.9	5.0	5.7
Locality										
Rural	28.1	22.6	10.6	8.8	3.8	39.2	37.3	6.2	5.5	5.8
Urban	25.6	32.2	8.7	3.4	2.0	40.7	40.2	7.1	3.1	3.9
Age										
Up to 25 years	25.7	27.0	10.2	6.9	3.8	38.3	38.3	5.9	5.5	6.0
26–35 years	27.1	25.5	9.9	7.7	3.5	40.5	37.7	6.4	4.3	5.6
36–45 years	28.8	25.1	9.7	8.1	2.9	37.8	38.6	6.0	5.1	5.0
46–55 years	27.0	23.6	10.2	8.4	3.5	34.9	38.2	7.2	4.6	6.3
56 years and above	30.0	21.3	10.9	6.4	2.9	40.6	36.3	6.9	5.8	4.2
Education										
Illiterate	28.6	21.1	12.3	6.6	5.0	40.6	34.3	5.1	7.8	6.5
Up to middle	28.4	23.8	9.2	8.9	2.8	42.9	35.6	8.6	3.5	4.3
College, without degree	25.8	31.3	8.0	7.7	1.6	37.8	38.6	6.9	4.1	5.9
Graduate and above	21.1	36.7	6.1	6.0	0.9	34.9	46.7	5.0	2.8	4.4
Occupation										
Unskilled worker	30.6	17.0	9.9	10.8	5.2	42.6	27.4	8.0	9.8	6.6
Agricultural and allied worker	28.4	17.8	11.5	8.9	5.2	43.4	36.6	6.8	4.8	3.8
Artisan and skilled worker	27.3	24.1	9.3	7.7	3.0	43.9	34.8	6.8	3.9	5.3
Cultivator (less than 5 acres)	26.1	26.2	14.0	6.4	4.9	35.4	37.3	4.0	7.6	8.9
Cultivator (5 acres and more)	29.7	34.6	8.2	1.6	2.5	35.8	44.5	3.0	3.0	8.0
Business	23.3	33.0	10.1	7.6	0.7	37.0	42.7	7.1	3.0	4.5
White collar and professional	26.2	30.8	5.6	8.0	0.3	37.4	42.3	9.0	2.5	2.2
Caste										
Scheduled caste	31.6	14.4	5.6	11.0	12.1	39.7	25.9	8.8	18.4	2.9
Scheduled tribe	39.2	19.0	6.2	6.5	1.0	46.2	34.3	7.0	0.6	0.6
Other backward caste	21.7	23.6	16.3	5.9	2.3	40.7	38.7	4.4	2.8	7.6
Upper caste	28.4	33.6	7.1	7.3	0.4	36.0	44.6	7.3	1.5	5.5
Religion										
Hindu	26.2	28.9	8.4	7.4	3.7	36.8	42.3	5.9	5.3	4.4
Muslim	35.3	3.1	25.3	10.1	1.2	54.8	11.8	6.9	2.9	16.4
Christian	39.9	3.0	2.0	5.6	—	60.5	21.1	8.6	0.9	0.4
Sikh	18.3	14.3	16.7	2.4	5.6	30.4	48.2	6.9	4.9	2.7
Other	26.5	6.0	12.0	2.4	4.8	41.7	21.3	15.9	10.4	2.4
Economic class										
Very poor	29.6	16.0	10.7	11.3	4.4	42.9	32.8	7.5	7.0	4.3
Poor	28.3	23.1	10.5	6.7	4.7	39.6	37.3	5.8	5.7	5.8
Middle	26.1	31.1	10.9	5.6	2.2	37.6	40.9	5.8	2.8	6.9
Upper	22.4	40.1	7.9	3.4	0.4	32.8	49.3	3.7	2.4	5.6

Note: Parties here represent pre-poll alliances.

1996: INC+: INC + AIADMK; BJP+: BJP + Samata + Shiv Sena + Haryana Vikas Party; NF: JD + Samajwadi Party; LF: CPI (M) + CPI + RSP + FBL.

2004: UPA. INC + TRS + RJD (Laloo) + IJNS (Paswan) + NCP + JMM + PDP + MUL + Kerala Congress (M) + JD(S) + RPI + RPI (Athawale) + PRBP + DMK + MDMK + PMK + PDS + Arunachal Congress.

NDA: BJP + TDP + JD(U) + IFDP + Shiv Sena + Biju Janata Dal + Akali Dal + AIADMK + Trinamul Congress + MNF + SDF + NPF; LF CPI(M) + CPI 4- RSP + FBL + Kerala Congress; SP+: SP + Lok Dal.

Data Source: Data Unit, CSDS (Delhi) and Election Commission India (2009).

Table 6.8b Social bases of political parties (2009–2014) (in percent)

Class-wise turnout, 2014 and 2009

Class	Voter Turnout	
	2009	2014
Poor	57	60
Lower	59	68
Middle	60	69
Upper	57	67
Total	58	67

Class-wise party preference, 2014 and 2009

Class	Congress		BJP	
	2009	2014	2009	2014
Poor	27	20	16	24
Lower	29	19	19	31
Middle	29	20	22	32
Upper	29	17	25	38
Total	29	19	19	31

Party preference of voters by different class and age groups, 2014

Age Group	Poor		Lower		Middle		Upper	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
18–22	23	24	18	35	17	40	11	44
23–25	24	25	18	34	21	32	16	43
26–35	19	27	21	33	19	33	17	40
36–45	18	24	17	30	20	32	15	36
46–55	19	22	21	31	20	31	20	35
56 and above	20	22	18	28	23	29	21	35
Total	20	24	19	31	20	32	17	38

Party preference of voters by different classes and caste/community

Caste/Community	Poor		Lower		Middle		Upper	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
Upper caste	13	37	11	48	15	46	13	55
OBC	15	28	15	37	16	33	14	37
SC	17	22	18	22	20	27	17	25
ST	28	33	31	36	25	39	26	53
Muslims	41	4	34	10	42	11	27	7
Others	19	17	23	10	22	24	31	16
Total	20	24	19	31	20	32	17	38

(Continued)

Table 6.8b (Continued)

Class-wise voter turnout in rural-urban locations, 2009 and 2014

Class	Village		Town/City		Metro	
	2009	2014	2009	2014	2009	2014
Poor	58	63	56	57	44	50
Lower	60	70	60	64	50	56
Middle	61	71	59	66	52	57
Upper	59	71	53	59	57	69
Total	59	69	58	63	49	57

Source: NES CSDS data unit, Delhi.

The social base of the Congress Party cuts across all social groups and cleavages of India, making it India's quintessential catch-all party. Nevertheless, Congress has relatively greater support in the lower social classes and among religious minorities. The social profile of the Hindu nationalist BJP presents a sharp contrast. Initially, it was very much a party of the 'Hindu-Hindi belt', which normally means the north Indian Gangetic plains. Of late, it has spread out of this regional base and formed governments in the West (Gujarat), and the South (Karnataka). Table 6.3 shows that the BJP continues to be relatively a party of the upper social order and Hindu upper castes, but has nevertheless already succeeded in extending its reach to the former untouchables, backward classes, tribals and even to a small section of Muslim voters as well.³² By the standards of its national support base, the left, consisting of both the communist parties (CPM and CPI), attracts proportionally more support from the lower social classes as well as support from the more educated voters. The rise of India's regional parties is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Like the Congress, in the regional context these parties cut across all social groups and compete with the Congress for the same social base, except for the OBCs, a social group sandwiched between the Hindu upper classes and the former untouchables. The leaders of many of India's regional parties are drawn from the OBCs, which correspond to the service castes (*sudra* in terms of the *varna* category). These groups which are not covered by India's programme for positive discrimination tend to extend proportionally more support to the regional parties.

At Independence, the introduction of universal adult franchise empowered underprivileged social groups with a new political resource. The right to vote by secret ballot, exercised at a polling booth conveniently located at a public place where one could vote freely, created an environment which was helpful for political participation. The right to vote in secrecy and without coercion acted as a direct challenge to social dominance posed by newly mobilized lower castes and religious minorities who felt empowered thanks to the value of the vote.

Social mobilization and its political containment, largely, though not exclusively, within the framework of political institutions, appear to have taken place in India as two independent but ultimately convergent processes. The pace of social change has accelerated through social reform legislation, recruitment of new social elites into the political arena and political mobilization through electoral participation. Their overall impact on the stability of the political system has been moderated by intermediary functions and parties at the regional and local levels. Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph have described the process as 'vertical, differential and horizontal' mobilization.³³ Typically,

as the marginal social groups discovered the negotiable value of the vote during the early years after Independence, they became avid players in the political arena at the local and regional levels. Established *Jajmani* systems—reciprocal social bonds based on the exchange of services and occupational specialization—broke down to create new groupings. Finally, caste associations, based on shared social and economic interests, emerged as links between the parties and society.³⁴ This has created useful room to manoeuvre in the hands of national, regional and local elites.³⁵

The Congress system

The first two decades following Independence in 1947, roughly corresponding to Nehru's stewardship of Indian politics, were crucial to the transition from a colonial state to a democratic government. The years between 1950 and 1967 were the period of solid dominance of the Congress Party. Although the opposition parties did not alternate with the dominant party in controlling the government, their exclusion from the formation of public policy was more formal than real. In fact, they were vital for the functioning of the Congress system. Their importance is amply demonstrated by the extent to which government policy was influenced (even though this influence was exercised indirectly) by opposition parties. This was the basic characteristic of the one-dominant-party system. It was not a one-party system in the sense that opposition parties were not legally barred from competing for power. However, during the first two decades after Independence, they hardly ever constituted a government on their own. These parties, which often had well-developed ideologies of the left and the right, were ranged on either side of the Congress Party on the main issues of Indian politics like land reform and foreign policy (e.g. A–E, B–F, etc. in Figure 6.1). Situated in the middle, the Congress was the party of consensus, pinned down to a centrist position because of the pressure exerted on it by the parties of the opposition, acting in unofficial collusion with factions within the Congress party sympathetic to their ideological inclinations.

During the first two decades after Independence, the Congress Party ruled at the centre as well as in the States, with the sole exception of Kerala where the Communists succeeded in gaining office (1957–59), only to be dismissed, leading to the imposition of President's rule, for their failure to contain severe civil disorder. This achieved this remarkable feat by drawing on its legacy as the party of Gandhi, Nehru and the Freedom Movement, its past record in office under colonial rule and its superior party organisation. But it also succeeded through patronage, the accommodation of often conflicting interests, and by developing an internal pattern of factions that made the party open to new interests. This unique achievement caused specialists of Indian politics to call this period the 'Congress system': 'a system of patronage [within which] traditional institutions of kin and caste were accommodated and a structure of pressures and compromises was developed'.³⁶ Thus, ironically and fortuitously, the dominant position of the Congress Party facilitated the growth of a bargaining political culture and the recruitment of new elites—both of which are indispensable for the transition to democracy in developing societies. The system, thus, managed to achieve competition although the Congress was the ruling party virtually everywhere in India. Individuals who had risen to power in the Congress organization sometimes constituted the chief opposition to the government and provided an alternative route to influence policy. In this process, elections at various levels of the party organization played an important role, as did the selection of party candidates for the General Elections.

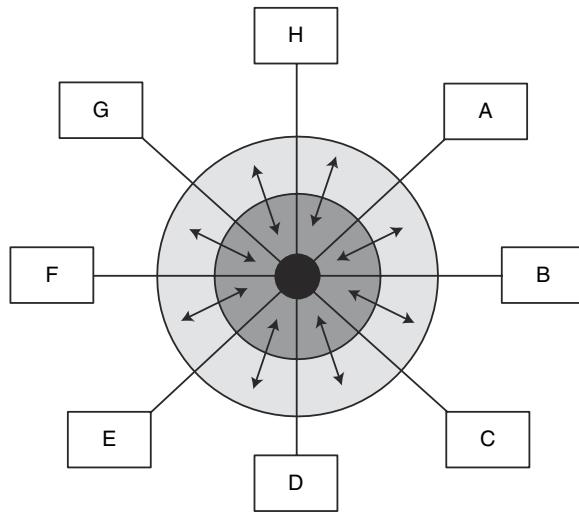


Figure 6.1 The Congress system.

Source: Adapted from Morris-Jones (1966) 'Dominance and Dissent' in *Government and Opposition*, p. 219.

The relative strength of political parties in the parliament meant that during those two decades following Independence, non-Congress parties had no possibility of exercising political power directly. Nevertheless, they had influence over policy as well as civil servants. The opposition parties in this system, therefore, were 'parties of pressure', operating outside the Congress but constantly criticizing, pressuring, censuring, and influencing opinion and interests both inside and outside the Parliament. This restrained the Congress from taking too intransigent a position on policy. The Congress contained factions ranging from the ideological left to the right and encompassing various regional parochial interests as well as more secular and modern pressure groups. Furthermore, the opposition parties constantly exerted a latent threat to the Congress that, if the latter strayed too far away from the centrist position, it would be displaced from power by a coalition of the aggrieved factions. This element of internal competition facilitated the mobilization of new interests and the recruitment of new social groups into power.

The Congress succeeded in establishing its dominance essentially by a process of gradual expansion of its social base so that new layers of recruitment and support were constantly brought into its fold, allowing it to garner a substantial number of votes in each region. Thanks to the fragmentation of the opposition, and the first-past-the-post voting system, its electoral support which never reached an absolute majority of votes, could be transformed into a majority of seats in the legislature. This was the basis of Congress dominance—emerging from short-term coalitions leading to a political majority rather than from a coherent and organic social base as a cadre-based party, wielding an ideology of social mobilization.³⁷

The post-Independence expansion of the political base of the Congress Party beyond its original social base in colonial India took place in phases. Soon after Independence, the Congress co-opted landed gentry, businessmen, peasant proprietors, new industrialists and the rural middle class—socially and economically entrenched groups in

society—into its organization. This provided the party with a strong and ready structure of support, with electoral ‘link men’ who controlled various ‘vote banks’, serviced through patronage. The process of co-optation replaced higher castes that dominated the party machine in the regions and districts. Wherever the process was successful, it expanded the social base of the Congress and continued its ascendancy. In addition, the Congress developed an elaborate network of patronage, which made it possible to bargain for political support in return for economic and social benefits with various social strata in rural and urban areas. Following India’s partition, the remainder of the Muslim community—bereft of its own elites and leaders of the Muslim League, many of whom migrated to Pakistan—turned largely to the Congress Party. Finally, Congress espousal of positive discrimination endeared it to its beneficiaries—drawn particularly from the former untouchables and tribals.

All this enabled the Congress to be a catch-all party and further consolidated its electoral organization on the basis of the traditional social structure as well as the emerging structure of economic opportunities.³⁸ Both traditionally entrenched social groups and the new aspirants developed a stake in Congress, internalized the symbolism and procedures of the electoral and parliamentary systems, and got actively involved in the overall framework of authority and decision-making represented by the Congress. The resulting distribution of consensus proved highly functional to the development of democratic values and procedure among the large masses of the Indian electorate.

Such a process necessarily confronted the Congress with new issues and new pressures. These have been addressed by neutralizing the more glaring sources of conflict in Indian society by timely and often anticipatory legislation—abolition of *zamindari*, far-reaching protective labour legislation, removal of gross social inequalities through the granting of special rights and advantages to backward groups, and linguistic reorganization of the States. These progressive legislative measures were often supplemented with firm suppression of secessionist and violent activities in various parts of the country. Along with legislation, the Congress attempted both ‘penetration’ of labour unions and ‘accommodation’ of minority communities, and at the same time an informal but elaborate system of conciliation and resolution of conflicts and factional disputes through the mediation of prominent individuals at various levels. All these steps jointly led to a considerable strengthening of the party of consensus and a corresponding weakening of the potential sources of cleavage that might have gravely affected the stability of the political system.

The role of the Congress Party in acting as a bridge between colonial India and post-colonial democracy is an important factor that explains India’s relative success in the transition to democracy compared to other successor states that emerged from the British Empire, and which have not been similarly successful. Whereas in places such as Pakistan, post-Independence politics eventually led to the simultaneous growth of anti-democratic social forces, and military rule, in India the Transfer of Power and transition from colonial rule to popular democracy led to a fusion of cultural pluralism and political transaction, thus creating an authentically Indian political process. By making politics the great engine of mobilization and identity, the post-Independence political process brought wide sections of society into the fold of the new political order dispersed the symbolism of parliamentary government and economic development and socialized traditional and emerging elites into the norms of democratic politics.

The modes of interest articulation and aggregation that took place within the framework of the ‘one-dominant-party system’ made the State the inevitable intermediary

between competing interests in disputes involving labour and management (as conceptualized in the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947), landowner and peasant, student and university, and in every conceivable social conflict. This led to a multiplication in the number of unions, all competing for basically the same pool of workers. It did contribute to ‘involtuted pluralism’—growth in the number of Unions competing for a limited pool of workers—and labour militancy accompanied by the diminution of average membership and financial viability.³⁹ This system of interest articulation, aggregation and conflict management was seriously challenged for the first time during the Emergency of 1975–77 (see Box 4.1).

Parties of ‘right’ and ‘left’: Hindu nationalism and communism

In the early 1990s, the BJP had confirmed its position as the main challenger to the INC in Northern India. Its presence outside the Hindi heartland of North India is a phenomenon of great significance. The steady evolution of the party in the national parliament is equally impressive. From a low point of two seats in the Lok Sabha in 1984, the party went up to 85 in 1989 and 182 seats in the parliamentary elections held in 1999. However, in 2004 the number of seats had come down to 138 and sank even further to 116 in 2009.⁴⁰ The downward trend has been caused by a variety of factors, such as the lack of a clear focus on its programme, organizational problems and desertion by some important coalition partners. However, with 282 seats it won in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, it appears to be firmly ensconced in power at the central level until the next parliamentary elections, due no later than 2019.

During its rapid rise to power, the BJP had drawn on the desire of many Hindus to see a more prominent role for Hindu culture within the institutions of the secular state and to deny special treatment for minorities, and a special status for the Muslim majority State of Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP came to power riding the crest of Hindu nationalism and promising to build a temple for Rama in the city of Ayodhya, on the same spot where the Babri Mosque stood before its destruction in 1992. It failed to find a solution to the conflict between Hindus and Muslims for exclusive ownership of the site. When the mosque was demolished by a mob of Hindu zealots the State government of Uttar Pradesh, led by the BJP, accepted responsibility for its failure to uphold law and order and resigned. Subsequently, the imperatives of India’s coalitional politics have caused the party to moderate its stand on cultural and confessional issues. During the short-lived tenure of Vajpayee as Prime Minister (1998–99), the party spoke more of good governance and less of Hindu nationalism. Back in office in 1999 and with a clear majority for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), of which the BJP was the largest partner in the Lok Sabha, Prime Minister Vajpayee announced the commitment of his government to follow the same moderate policies that he had launched during his previous tenure.

The General Election of 2004 to the Lok Sabha took place about six months before the end of the five-year term of the NDA government, led by the BJP. When the government called for early elections, nearly all opinion polls predicted a comfortable NDA victory on the strength of its record in office as well as the personal popularity of Prime Minister Vajpayee. In the event, the victory by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) took everyone by surprise. In retrospect, the NDA’s campaign slogan ‘India Shining’, which celebrated its achievements regarding the unprecedented rate of growth of the economy, seemed to backfire. Those who had not gained from the liberalization of the economy, those who stood to lose from the removal of subsidies and

the population in rural areas of India, as well as sections of religious minorities, voted against the NDA coalition. The Congress Party, which, for the first time, could make pre-election alliances on a ‘secular’ platform with regional parties opposed to the Hindu nationalist BJP, was able to use the votes cast, in favour of the UPA, efficiently. In the process, it could increase the number of its own seats in the Lok Sabha. The Congress Party has reinforced this strategy—of appealing to the Indian voter from a national, secular and pro-poor platform while pressing ahead with the agenda of liberalization, nuclearisation and diplomatic engagement with Pakistan. This yielded a rich harvest in the form of 206 seats in the Lok Sabha parliamentary election in 2009.⁴¹

Founded in 1927, the Communist Party of India (CPI) is one of the oldest in the world. It was proscribed for most of the time under British rule except towards the end when the party openly supported the war effort once the Soviet Union came under attack from Nazi Germany. The party went through factional struggle and several splits on ideological grounds following India’s Independence. The Telangana uprising of 1946–47, modelled on the Chinese revolution, was rapidly put down by the Indian army. This discredited the leftist faction. Under the leadership of the right faction, the party came to terms with Indian democracy, took part in the first General Election, emerging as the second largest party after the Congress, though far behind it in terms of its actual number of seats. More success was to follow. The Communist Party won the regional election in the southern State of Kerala in 1957, a first victory for communism in a democratic election. Coinciding with the resolution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to support ‘peaceful transition to democracy’, the party looked poised for a bigger role in Indian politics. That was, however, not to be. The dismissal of the communist government of Kerala after two years in office by Congress Party in the centre, under Article 356 of the constitution which provides for direct central rule when the deterioration of law and order threatens lawful governance showed the limits of ‘bourgeois democracy’, exactly as the left faction of the party had argued. More bad news was to follow. The India-China war of 1962 caused the left faction to come out in favour of China, leading to the incarceration of their main leaders. The split was formalized in 1964 with the founding of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), commonly referred as CPM, which followed a radical, pro-Chinese line compared to the Communist Party of India (CPI) which stuck with a more moderate, pro-Congress and pro-Soviet line. The CPM itself split five years later when its own left wing emerged as a new party—the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (M-L))—and initiated a peasant uprising in the Naxalbari district in the foothills of the Himalayas. The peasant uprising was put down by the security forces amid much bloodshed but has since then fragmented into many different groups who have migrated to various parts of India and continue to pose a threat to the Indian state.

Two main trends have emerged since those turbulent times.⁴² The CPM, which came to power in West Bengal in the late 1970s, stayed on for over three decades in office, making it one of the longest serving, democratically elected communist governments anywhere in the world. At the centre, the 60 communist MPs—whose support from ‘outside’ was crucial to the continuation of the UPA government until they withdrew their support on the issue of the nuclear framework agreement between India and the United States, in 2008—constituted an important source of influence on public policy. However, the urge for revolution, powerfully articulated by the ‘Naxalites’—this is how the Indian Maoists named themselves—lives on, under various names in different parts of India. Their violent activities continue to be a source of anxiety for the Indian government, particularly in view of the success of Maoists in neighbouring Nepal.

The durability of change, and resilience of multi-party democracy

Anti-incumbency, economic miss-governance, policy paralysis, corruption scandals worked to the BJP's favour in highlighting the Congress government as inept, paralysed and leader-less. As has been demonstrated above, the electorate turnout was historically significant as was the degree of gains and losses for the BJP and Congress respectively. The BJP as a political party made noteworthy changes to its manifesto and electoral strategy and, in the process, allowed for the induction of new leaders. In this manner, the BJP incorporated two mechanisms of adaptation into its strategy and organisation. This final section turns to assess the durability of this reorientation.⁴³ We examine underlying structural dynamics of change in India's economy and society, what this means for political change and assess whether the Congress party could stage a comeback.

Social, economic and political change

By focusing on an economic agenda, the BJP correctly assessed the mood and needs of a country where demography is a crucial fact. Using the charge that the Congress had ruled over 'ten years of jobless growth',⁴⁴ the BJP cleverly targeted a new voter base of 18–19 year olds, first time voters, entering the job market at a time when the unemployment rate for graduates was particularly high. Thus, the BJP and Narendra Modi's vision emphasised not only job creation but also the critical need for skills development. With millions of Indians moving out of agriculture and away from villages, urbanisation has been a central concern for some time. The BJP proposed new ideas such as the 'smart city' campaign aimed at re-developing and using technology to revitalise existing urban centres.⁴⁵ At the same time, the BJP's agenda recognised the need to improve agricultural productivity, infrastructure to enhance inter-state distribution and introduction of the long-awaited Goods and Services Tax (GST)⁴⁶ to further integrate the domestic market. In government, Modi has also spearheaded a '*Rurban Mission*' to provide urban amenities in rural areas.

Modi and his team of advisors, secretaries and analysts have also argued for the need to 'change mindsets'. This was publicized during the launch in September 2014 of the 'Make in India' campaign, which strives to attract investment and to boost the country's manufacturing sector. The change refers to the beliefs and perceptions of potential investors and manufacturers but most importantly, to the government, which Modi has often stressed needs to cut back on the red tape and lay out the red carpet. Apart from its relevance for the economic sector, the need to change attitudes and deeply held beliefs has been a social theme for Modi and in many of his public speeches he urges people to change their attitudes towards work (reminding people of the need to give dignity to labour), hygiene⁴⁷ and, even lamenting the way in which parents bring up their children, with a special emphasis on the girl child.⁴⁸ In each of these, it is Modi first and foremost, but also senior ministers such as the Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, who seek to address entrenched social and economic problems by invoking and applying a fresh mentality.

The Congress party: spent force or phoenix in waiting?

A number of analysts have pointed out that the Congress party has suffered defeats before and managed to make a comeback.⁴⁹ After all, the Congress party has demonstrated its resilience, transforming from an Independence movement into a successful

political party. The years between 1950 and 1967 were a period of solid dominance of the Congress party, referred to as the ‘Congress System’, a term used by the late political scientist, Rajni Kothari. In his words, this was “a system of patronage [within which] traditional institutions of kin and caste were accommodated and a structure of pressures and compromises was developed”.⁵⁰ Congress dominance was not a one-party system in the sense that opposition parties were not legally barred from competing for power. However, the opposition parties did not alternate with the dominant party in controlling the government, but their exclusion from the formation of public policy was more formal than real. In fact, they were vital for the functioning of the Congress system. These parties, which often had well-developed ideologies of the Left and the Right, were positioned on either side of the Congress party on the main cleavages of Indian politics like land reform, foreign policy. Situated in the middle, the Congress was the ‘party of consensus’, pinned down to a dynamic equilibrium, which resembled a centrist position because of the pressure exerted on it by the parties of the opposition. The Congress was thus the fulcrum around which Indian politics revolved.

In 1967, the Congress lost a substantial number of seats in the Lok Sabha, and lost control of six State governments in the same year. Suffering from the recent death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, the ensuing power struggle, leadership vacuum and, a weak economy, the year 1967 is commonly depicted as a turning point in the Congress party’s fortunes. While Indira Gandhi’s sweeping victory in 1971 established her predominance she failed to restore the ‘Congress System’, ushering in a phase that has been referred to as a process of ‘de-institutionalisation’.⁵¹ Following the Emergency of 1975–77, the electorate in 1977 sought to punish Indira Gandhi for suspending democracy, resulting in India’s first coalition government and marking the first time that the Congress was thrown out of power. Despite staging a comeback in 1980 and, an even more dramatic victory in 1984, the Congress party has not been able to gain a majority since. The 16th Lok Sabha elections are the first since 1984 to deliver a clear victor with the capacity to influence the entire political space.

A Congress party comeback, along the lines of the 1980 and 1984 elections seems unlikely. Three main obstacles appear in the way of a Congress return: leadership, ideas and power. Most analysts and observers would agree that Rahul Gandhi has not proven to have the leadership skills, nor the capacity and, perhaps not even the will to lead. Nonetheless, no new generation of leaders has emerged and in fact party and family loyalists (for instance, senior Congress party leader, Digvijay Singh) continue to call upon Rahul Gandhi to lead the way forward.

On ideas, the Congress party will have to find a way to reinvent its traditional pro-poor platform within a political space dominated by aspiration for upward mobility and integration with the global political economy. Under the Congress’ watch, the world’s largest social security scheme NREGA, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was launched. Ambitious in scope and aims, MNREGA nevertheless did not win the Congress party enough votes amongst the poor or rural electorate. The BJP is unlikely to scrap such poverty-alleviation programmes but it has sought to re-cast its fundamentals in a manner that is in sync with the changing times. One of the earliest post-election actions was the new government’s announcement of a massive programme to open bank accounts across the country to empower new account holders and to end, what they termed, ‘financial untouchability’ by providing access to credit and insurance. It is also envisioned that welfare benefits could be paid directly into bank accounts to cut waste and corruption. With Modi currently occupying centre stage, his rhetoric,

a compelling blend of populism, performance and policy output orientation, it is going to be difficult for the Congress party to come up with convincing and captivating alternatives.

The third critical challenge involves the simple arithmetic of power. In the past, the Congress succeeded in establishing dominance essentially by a process of gradual expansion of its social base, emerging from short-term coalitions leading to a political majority—rather than a coherent and organic social base, a cadre based party, wielding an ideology of social mobilization. Thanks to a fragmented opposition in the past, this could be transformed into a majority of seats in the legislature. With the Congress, itself part of the fragmented opposition, deprived of its access to power, political resources and opportunities to recoup its losses,⁵²

Trends in party competition

In the more than seven decades of independence, political competition has spread throughout the country and voters have become more conscious of their rights and interests, capable of participating politically through a variety of means, including protests. Political parties learned to combine solid support in a specific social base with variable support from other social groups, depending on the coalitional arrangement struck with other political parties. This led to the formation of large, stable coalitions of parties within broad ideological labels at the national level, while party competition at the local and regional levels was more volatile. Overall, the most important consequence of this configuration of party competition has been to induce a sense of policy moderation and structural evolution to Indian politics.⁵³

As we have already seen above, the 2014 General Elections was a critical election, which has brought about a major realignment of Indian politics. The scale of the BJP's victory and voter turnout indicate that the elections were unusual in terms of the electorate's response, especially when viewed historically. By looking at the campaign of the BJP and various internal policy decisions, the party demonstrated its ability to adapt its core issues and adjust its hierarchies to tap into voter concerns and gain voter allegiance. This it did far more effectively than the Congress. The BJP may have only won 31 percent of the national vote but in a multi-party, federalised political system like India's, this is above the average that previous governments needed in the last 18 years. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that in those constituencies where the BJP did win, it did so comfortably. Because of the campaign and its outcome, the changes in power relations within the BJP have also been cemented. A new generation of leaders (Cabinet Ministers, State Chief Ministers, Senior Bureaucrats and defence officers) have been inducted, adding to the likelihood that new ideas will gain traction within the bureaucracy and amongst policy makers.

The central factor however, determining the resilience and stability of multi-party competition is the evolution of a basic consensus on the rules of the game within which party competition takes place. One crucial consideration here is how resilient and sustainable the BJP's dominant position at the central level might continue to be. Here, it is important to note that the BJP is deeply susceptible to dynamics that could undermine it. For example, in the 2014 assembly elections in Haryana the BJP won a momentous victory, leading it to form the State government on its own for the very first time. However, in Maharashtra it fell short of an absolute majority and opted to rely on outside support rather than go with its traditional ally, the Shiv Sena, a move that

surprised many. The delicate game being played by the BJP to secure maximum influence in the country's richest State is a crucial one for it puts to test the capabilities of a young and relatively inexperienced Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis. Furthermore, and even more significantly, the decision not to align with the Shiv Sena could provide the BJP with greater manoeuvrability in managing the Right flank of extremists and activists, within the party and outside its formal structure (for instance with the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, an organization that acts primarily as the voice of Hindu opinion in the Indian Diaspora).⁵⁴ Similarly, as we have already seen above, the results of the Delhi and Bihar assembly elections have shown that the growth of the BJP can be checked, leaving future trends wide open. Finally, the inability of the BJP to transform its electoral mandate to policy effectiveness at the central level has introduced yet another uncertainty to the significance of multi-party democracy in India.

In the Upper House, the Rajya Sabha, the BJP is in a minority with 43 seats as opposed to the Congress party's 66 seats. The Rajya Sabha is an important institution to pass crucial legislation, such as the much-disputed land bill. Contesting State elections and a careful calibration of campaign strategy and topics are therefore going to remain a top priority for the BJP. It is in this regard that alliance politics and the NDA will continue to play an important role in the BJP's long-term strategic planning and manoeuvring to ensure continuity of their pole position. For instance, with eyes set on the 2017 Punjab Assembly polls, the BJP has been careful to work together with the Shiromani Akali Dal, as was evident recently in the State's municipal elections. In addition, allies are going to retain their leverage over the BJP given the government's contentious and ambitious agenda on legislative issues such as the land acquisition bill and the goods and services tax. That said, in the end, politics is a zero-sum game of power, and current allies can grow only at each other's expense. So, no firm conclusions can be drawn about 'ever-lasting alliances' despite current solidarity and solicitude.

The greatest challenge for the BJP in the upcoming years will be to deliver economic results combined with social harmony and political unity. Having fought a campaign that promised to fight corruption, improve governance and ensure development, the focus will be on tangible results and the media especially does not miss an opportunity to expose empty or failed promises. At the same time, economic development alone is not enough, as was demonstrated in the 2004 elections when the BJP campaigned with the slogan 'India Shining' and was thrown out of office. The only way to ensure social harmony will be if the BJP drops its majoritarian issues and concentrates on becoming a centrist party, not only on matters of the economy but also on social issues, by giving prime emphasis to guaranteeing law and order.

A crucial question remains whether the Congress party will be able to act as an effective opposition party, coordinating the effort of several regional parties present in the Parliament. This is crucial in the sense that the BJP does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha—the Upper House of the Indian Parliament—whose support the government needs in order to pass major legislation. No political party has been recognized as the official opposition in the 16th Lok Sabha, given that no party secured at least 10 percent of the seats. The 10 percent principle has been used in the past and was drawn from the British parliamentary system where the leader of the opposition must be able to reach the quorum needed to be recognized as the official opposition and if necessary, to form an alternative government. However, it is worth recalling that this is not an unprecedented situation. Between 1952 and 1969 and again 1980 to 1989, no opposition party had the requisite strength and as a result, there was no officially recognised leader of the

opposition. With several competing parties in the opposition, the BJP is faced with pressures from multiple fronts. This is a difficult challenge to manage but also an incentive for the party to learn to cope with the countervailing forces of Indian politics, and with this goal in view, to cultivate, build and consolidate a moderate and centrist government.

Partisan conflict and systemic consensus

After Independence, when electoral competition based on universal adult franchise began, the level of participation was relatively modest and parties approached voters, many voting for the first time in their lives, through village notables. Over the course of the past six decades, political competition has spread to every nook and cranny of the political system. Voters have become much more conscious of their rights and capable of pursuing their interests through a variety of means of participation which includes protest movements. However, politics has remained confined largely within the system. Anti-system parties and political violence have remained on the fringes of the political system. Political parties, as one can see in Table 6.3, have learnt to combine solid support in a specific social base with variable support from other social groups, depending on the nature of the coalitional arrangement they strike with other political parties. This has led to the formation of large, stable coalitions of parties within broad ideological labels at the national level while party competition at the local and regional levels has been more volatile.

The most important consequence of this configuration of party competition has been to induce a sense of moderation in Indian politics.⁵⁵ The fiery rhetoric and partisan outbursts among political parties that one often witnesses in televised debates in the Indian Parliament or on the campaign trail might cause those unfamiliar with the inner dynamics of party competition in India to ask how the country manages to combine party competition and parliamentary democracy. In older democracies, particularly in the European continent, the coexistence of party competition and democratic governance has been made possible thanks to a large measure of consensus on the usefulness of parties in the first place, and a consensus on policy, within which parties chart out their specific positions.

In India, one can find plentiful evidence of the ability of political leaders to combine divisive rhetoric with united and purposeful functioning of governance. The UPA coalition led by Manmohan Singh, a good example of this phenomenon, could command a majority with the support of the Left Front (LF) for the first four years in office. During this period, there have been policy differences between the government and the LF on the pace of liberalization of the economy, and, most of all, on the nuclear issue. Finally, when the LF withdrew its support on the nuclear issue in 2008, the government could win support from the Samajwadi Party and survive the vote of confidence in an atmosphere marked by high drama, accusations of wrong-doing and breach of parliamentary norms by some legislators who voted against their party line. However, in a span of barely a few weeks, parliamentary government was back on the rails. The opposition NDA coalition held together during the tenure of the parliament that was elected in 2004 and managed to function as an effective and cohesive opposition, though there have been policy differences among the members of this body. Even in the regional arenas of India, where the levels of rectitude are not always the same as at the national level, partisan politics and parliamentary governance have functioned together reasonably well. The absence of this deeper consensus has allowed party competition in countries

like Bangladesh to get out of hand, paralyse governance altogether, and has facilitated the intervention of the army as a last resort.

Three factors—an awareness of the usefulness of political parties, overlapping social bases, and overall value consensus among party supporters—explain why this unusual combination of partisanship, governmental coherence, and policy continuity have been possible despite governmental change. The public opinion data on the usefulness of parties in Table 6.9 show that the overall support for parties, seen as ‘a good deal’ or ‘somewhat useful’, has gone up from 32.5 percent in the 1971 survey to 42.5 percent in the 1996 findings, though the level of disappointment (‘not much useful’) did also go up marginally as well. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the approval score for the usefulness of parties is higher than average among young voters, Muslims, upper castes, men and the highly educated (see Table 6.9). In other words, the ‘opinion leaders’ and voters from minority communities are supportive of parties as a legitimate institution for the articulation and aggregation of interests.

The second explanation for the coexistence of partisanship and consensus and political moderation comes from the fact that the social bases of Indian parties are largely overlapping (see Table 6.3). Though there is a tendency for the left parties to garner more support from lower social classes, and for the BJP to get higher than average support among the former untouchables, and for the Akali Dal Party to get substantial support among Sikhs, overall, one does not see the kind of binding contract between social cleavages and parties found in the case of some European democracies like class based voting in the UK or voting on ethnic lines in Belgium and Netherlands. The Congress has remained India’s quintessential catchall party,⁵⁶ but the Congress example is imitated by others. Even the BSP has actively cultivated support among Brahmins to build a coalition between the upper and lower strata against the middle-status groups (see Figure 3.3).

This kind of loose relation between cleavages and parties has been made possible by two factors. In the first place, unlike in Europe, party politics did not emerge in response to the Industrial Revolution, where workers and owners rallied behind radical and conservative parties. In India, as we have already seen, parties emerged as elite initiatives to get electoral power in response to the introduction of restricted franchise. When Islam emerged as a major political cleavage during the last decades of colonial rule, and the Muslim League used its identification with Islam and the Muslims of the Sub-continent to position itself against the Congress Party, the attempt at the communal polarization of Indian society was resisted by the Congress Party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Eventually, the Partition of India, leading to the departure of the Muslim League to Pakistan, significantly lowered the salience of Islam as a national cleavage for partisan voting in post-Independence politics. The attempt by the movement of Hindu nationalism to revive it in recent times (see Table 6.5) has been only marginally successful. As such, Indian parties, despite their rhetoric that sometimes mimics western, programmatic parties, tend to be much more pragmatic and accommodating than one would expect from their campaign slogans and manifestos. This is facilitated by the fact that the social cleavages in India tend to be cross-cutting rather than cumulative.

Finally, at the level of the supporters of the parties, when interrogated on their position on some of the salient issues of Indian politics, one finds considerable overlap in issue positions. This relative convergence of the followers at the level of issues (see Tables 6.11–6.13) provides the leaders of the parties with greater room to manoeuvre regarding pragmatic compromises. Despite their formal ideological orientations, in practice all parties tend to converge towards the centrist position.

Table 6.9 Usefulness of political parties (in percent)

Response	1971	1996
Good deal	10.9	9.5
Somewhat	21.6	33.0
Not much	25.7	27.2
Don't know	41.7	30.3
<i>Usefulness of political parties –</i> <i>Somewhat and good deal (%)</i>		1996
Illiterate		27.7
Female		32.5
Scheduled tribe		33.0
Very poor		35.1
56 years or above		37.1
Rural		41.1
Scheduled caste		41.4
OBC		41.4
Hindu		41.9
All India average		42.5
25 years or less		44.8
Muslim		45.4
Upper caste		46.9
Urban		47.0
Upper class		47.8
Male		52.2
College and above		65.6

Data Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1996.

When cross-tabulated against partisan preferences ('which party did you vote for?'), answers to the question 'Was the destruction of the Babri Mosque justified?' reveal an interesting pattern. For the population as a whole at 38 percent, people saying that 'it was not justified', form the largest category (see Table 6.10). The more educated and urban voters, and, not surprisingly, Muslims, tend to be opposed to the demolition. A large part of the Indian electorate (29 percent) in 1996 had not even heard about the demolition which had taken place four years earlier. Only a little over one-fifth of the Indian electorate deemed the demolition to be justified. Quite interestingly, over a quarter of BJP partisans thought the demolition unjustified compared to 43 percent among the partisans of the Congress party who thought so. Whereas many national leaders of Hindu nationalism were equivocal about the demolition, 25.7 percent of those who voted for the BJP had opposed it and only two-fifths of its supporters found the demolition justified.

Regarding a negotiated resolution to the Kashmir conflict rather than a military 'solution', the number of people who prefer negotiation to force has gone up from 33.4 percent in 1996 to 59 percent in 2004 (see Table 6.11). Their numbers are even higher among BJP sympathizers in 2004 than in 1996. The symmetry of opinion in this case between the Congress and the BJP points towards the growth of a bi-partisan consensus. Once again, the support for a negotiated solution is much higher among those with college education, the middle and upper classes, and among Muslims.

There has been a significant change in public opinion regarding the Babri Mosque since 1996. Compared to 38 percent of those interviewed in 1996 who had considered the demolition of the mosque unjustified, numbers have come down to 31.2 percent in 2004. Thus, as compared to 22.7 percent who had thought the demolition justified, the percentage of supporters of demolition has shrunk to 12.9 percent in 2009. The big change appears to have taken place among the undecided whose numbers have grown from 10.2 percent who said they did not know if it was justified or not to 14 percent, and the percentage of those saying that they had not heard of demolition has gone up from 29 to 41.9 percent.

Public opinion on Kashmir appears to have changed significantly between 2004 and 2009, with those suggesting that the conflict should be solved through negotiation having come down from 59 percent in 2004 to 37 percent, and those suggesting that insurgency should be militarily suppressed having gone up from 8.8 percent in 2004 to 13.7 percent in 2009. Some of those who were in favour of negotiation might have moved over to the undecided, whose percentage has grown from 21.4 to 38 percent.

More recent data from 2009 show a significant change in public opinion. The number of those who support negotiation has come down from 59 percent in 2004 to 37 percent

Table 6.10 Partisan response to the demolition of Babri mosque (in percent)

Response	INC	BJP+	NF	LF	BSP	Total
Unjustified	42.9	25.7	48.2	54.9	26.7	38.1
Don't know	8.0	11.4	7.6	9.2	19.9	10.2
Justified	16.5	40.7	24.1	9.1	27.3	22.7
Not heard about demolition	32.6	22.2	20.0	26.9	26.1	29.0

Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1996.

Table 6.11 Partisan opinion on Kashmir

	1996						2004					
	INC	BJP+	NF	LF	BSP	Total	UPA	NDA	LF	BSP	SP	Total
Negotiation	33.8	34.7	32.6	32.9	25.5	33.4	58.8	61.7	63.0	46.4	57.8	59.0
Can't say	32.8	26.4	30.7	28.7	28.9	32.0	21.0	18.2	18.1	33.9	28.2	21.4
Should be suppressed	9.7	17.5	11.0	4.9	14.3	11.1	8.2	10.1	9.4	8.3	7.5	8.8
Not heard of Kashmir	21.2	19.8	23.3	32.2	30.7	21.6	12.1	10.0	9.5	11.3	6.5	10.8

Data Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1996, 2004.

Table 6.12 India should develop friendly relations with Pakistan (in percent)

Response	INC	BJP+	NF	LF	BSP	Total
Disagree	17.1	23.4	11.6	17.4	12.4	17.6
Don't know/No opinion	37.0	34.5	36.6	37.3	37.6	37.9
Agree	45.8	42.1	51.8	45.3	50.0	44.5

Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1996.

Table 6.13 Need for separate civil code for every community by party support (in percent)

	1996					2004					<i>Total</i>	
	INC	BJP+	NF	IF	BSP	<i>Total</i>	UPA	NDA	LF	BSP	SP	
Disagree	29.9	36.5	29.4	22.1	30.4	30.4	27.4	29.7	22.4	20.2	22.3	27.1
Don't know	23.8	22.9	28.5	18.2	24.8	25.1	19.0	17.4	15.0	26.3	23.5	19.2
Agree	46.3	40.6	42.2	59.6	44.7	44.4	53.6	52.9	62.6	53.5	54.2	53.8

Data Source: National Election Studies, CSDS (Delhi) 1996, 2004.

in 2009 whereas during the same period, those who support suppression of militancy have gone up from 9 percent in 2004 to 14 percent in 2009. Another big change is the number of the undecided: the number of those who claim to have no opinion has gone up from 21 to 38 percent (NES 2009).

India's relations with Pakistan—long considered a divisive issue nationally and particularly between the BJP and the Congress (see Table 6.12)—turns out not to be so. Whereas only about 18 percent is against India's attempts to develop friendly relations, the bulk of the population is either for improved, peaceful relations or abstains from pronouncing an opinion. Quite contrary to what one might expect, the sympathizers of the BJP and the Congress are actually at the same level with regard to Indian national average at being friendly to Pakistan.

Finally, on the issue of a separate personal law for each community (Table 6.13), support for a multi-cultural solution—which permits the existence of different legal regimes for different communities within the structure of the same national state—has gone up nationally from 44 percent in 1996 to 54 percent in 2004. Whereas the difference between the support for this position among sympathizers of the BJP and the Congress had a difference of 6 percent in 1996, by 2004 it had levelled off almost to the same proportion, which, interestingly, is the majority view among the respective groups.

Interest articulation: ‘demand groups’ in India

The concept of ‘demand groups’, which includes any group with a demand—interest groups, pressure groups, ad hoc coalition of individuals staging a gherao—was introduced by Rudolph and Rudolph (1987). Within the framework of a consensus about the basic values of the political system such as democracy, the rule of law, property rights and the right to representation, interest articulation is taken up by demand groups that combine modern and traditional features. In addition to a scrutiny of modes of interest articulation in India, the section also raises some questions about the impact of the liberalization and globalization of India’s economy on the trade union movement. How has liberalization affected the structure and process of interest articulation in India? How do potential losers cope with the challenge of the ‘new’ political economy? These issues are salient for the smooth functioning of the democratic political system.

‘Demand groups’⁵⁷ are one of the distinctive features of interest articulation in India. These have emerged as a response to the structural limitations of labour unions. Demand groups rely on ad hoc rather than bureaucratic organization, and use mass mobilization more than expert knowledge and technical bargaining as methods. One finds shades of both movement politics and the politics of organized interests in their midst. Demand groups function through a two-track strategy which combines rational

protest and institutional participation. Interest articulation and aggregation function best when wage demands follow the capacity of the enterprise to show a profit rather than preceding it.

Though the onerous task of the articulation and aggregation of interests is primarily the function of political parties, most societies provide for a number of other organizations—some large, with bureaucratic structures, and others ad hoc, with merely grass-roots organizations—to play a supplementary role. The contrast between the evolution of organized labour and labour legislation in the West and in India is important to the understanding of the Indian situation. How did the western world evolve from the grim life situation of industrial workers to peaceful and organized interest articulation by unions? In the West, the evolution of the modern state, democratic empowerment and the growth of institutionalized forms of interest articulation and aggregation have kept pace with the growth in surplus value. In India, recognition of workers' rights, first under British rule and subsequently by the post-colonial state after Independence, came before large-scale industrialization. Consequently, major trade unions such as the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) became 'labour aristocracies', whereas the general capacity of interest articulation by labour remained weak.

Unlike in Europe,⁵⁸ right from the beginning, capital in India became dependent on the state, through the Congress system and state domination of the economy. Consequently, the state took the initiative in the matter of labour welfare.⁵⁹ These points can be illustrated with reference to the attempts to unionize students, workers and peasants. Student and labour organizations in India are both plentiful and active: but their evolution has taken a different direction compared to the form they have taken in liberal democracies. More than four million students are registered in some 7,000 colleges and universities in India. Most students are not politically involved, but the activists provide a reservoir from which political parties and protest movements can draw leadership and support. Campuses have long been centres of political opposition and student government elections are usually fought on party lines. The RSS student movement, the 'Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad' (ABVP), is now the largest student organization in India.

Labour unions in India, as in most developing countries, have been highly political. Reflecting the central role of the state in labour relations, union demands for better working conditions and higher wages are directed less often towards management than towards the government. Government tribunals for binding arbitration as well as wide ministerial discretion have made the government the critical focus of pressure. With both labour and management dependent on government intervention, collective bargaining is virtually non-existent, and the government has come to bear the brunt of all dissatisfaction. Government labour policy is guided, for the most part, by an effort to reduce the number of strikes and lockouts, and it handles labour disputes with a combination of the carrot and the stick.

No more than 10 million workers—roughly 3 percent of India's labour force—are unionized at only a nominal level. However, because they are organized and are situated in strategic sectors of the economy, they command considerable power, if not influence—at least to disrupt. There are some 25,000 unions in India, most tied directly to political parties and affiliated with one of the major trade union federations. The INTUC, the largest federation, is associated with the Congress (I) party and has often served as an arm of government labour policy. The fastest growing union has been the

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), with ties to the BJP. Much of its growth has come at the expense of the two Communist Party federations—the AITUC, associated with the CPI, and the CITU, associated with the Communist Party (Marxist) (CPM). One of the more militant unions is the faction-ridden socialist HMS.

Trade unions and employers' associations

Under India's labour law, any seven workers can formally set up a trade union. State-appointed labour inspectors provide counsel and inquire into the conditions of work. Trade unionism in India today is built on the foundations of the continuous existence of some leading trade unions and employers' organizations. For example, the AITUC, established in 1920, and thus the oldest Indian trade union, is one of the largest central trade union organizations in the country. It was founded by the INC as a mainstream labour organization during the Independence movement, in which it played a significant role. Since Independence, the AITUC has been affiliated with the CPI. A second example is the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF), founded in 1925, which is today one of the largest labour organizations in India with a membership of more than a million railway workers.

Like that of workers, several well-organized interest representations of employers can be found in India. One famous example is the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), founded in 1895 as the Engineering and Iron Trades Association. It became CII in 1992. It is now the most visible business association in India with over 4,700 member companies, 11 overseas offices and institutional partnerships with 216 organizations in 94 countries. Similarly, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), founded in 1927 under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, together with the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), functions as the apex chamber for trade associations and industry in India. Both FICCI and ASSOCHAM are key actors in policy formulation and the socio-economic transformation of the country. They also have a significant role in the making of government economic policy.

Unlike in liberal democracies where interest groups concentrate basically on the conditions of work, which they seek to improve through collective bargaining, India's unions are closely affiliated with political parties and, thus, become especially active at the time of elections. The culture of effective collective bargaining is not deeply entrenched. Rather than thinking of organized strikes as the ultimate weapon, India's unions often resort to illegal stoppage of work (referred to as 'wild cat strikes'), and rely on state intervention on their behalf to win better conditions. Additionally, they are highly fragmented, with an increasing number of unions competing for a stagnant pool of workers. Also, intra-union feuds reduce the effectiveness of the union movement.⁶⁰

Trade unionism in India has gone through four broad phases since Independence, corresponding with structural changes in the economy. The first phase, 1950 to the mid-1960s, saw the government pursuing a planned economy and an import substitution strategy which corresponded to the rise of public-sector unionism. The second phase lasted until the late 1970s, and was a period of relative economic stagnation and political instability. It witnessed rising labour discontent, inter-union rivalries and industrial conflict. Organizations like the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) emerged as leading voices in the labour movement. The third phase, 1980 to 1991, was characterized by uneven economic development during which decentralized bargaining and independent trade unionism both gained ground. Inter-State and inter-regional variations

in the labour-management regimes grew wider with unions strengthened in the more prosperous economic sectors. The fourth phase started with the economic reforms of the early 1990s and is characterized by demands for greater labour market flexibility, especially in employment and industrial dispute management. Reforms are considered vital to stimulate India's manufacturing sector but are resisted particularly by the left parties which, since 2004, have lent outside support to the ruling UPA coalition.

In addition to the modern forms of interest articulation, there are also indigenous variations of this as well. The tradition of unconventional direct action has spawned many variants.⁶¹ Demand groups supplement their political repertoire with several modes of direct action. These include *satyagraha*, *hartal*, *bandh*, *dharna*, *gherao*, *jail bharo*, and *rasta roko*. *Morcha*, a military term meaning battle formation, has been taken by the Akalis to describe their protest movements in Punjab and by V.P. Singh in his People's Movement, Jan Morcha. These are supplemented by social movements. For example, the '*Chipko movement*' in northern India fought for the protection of the Himalayan forests. Based on Gandhian principles, it used non-violent protest and attracted attention with its tactic of village women hugging trees to prevent them from being chopped down. Their first protest action took place in April 1973, and the movement had its major success in 1980 when it secured a 15-year ban on 'green felling' in the Himalayan forests of Uttar Pradesh.

There are also more specialized pressure groups, such as the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), also known as the Indian Peasant Union, which has been active in organizing *kisans*. The *kisans* are divided into two broad sections, namely, the small self-sufficient landowners who cultivate land with family labour and do not employ outside labour, and those whose holdings are usually above the subsistence level.

The Emergency of 1975–77 brought together a wide range of political forces for the defence of civil liberties. These groups, consisting of lawyers, journalists, academics, social workers and political activists, became an important pressure group starting in the 1980s. Their presence and intervention have publicized the struggles of vulnerable social groups and exposed acts of administrative injustice and, in more extreme cases, state repression. Thus, the greatly restricted scope for interest articulation and aggregation caused by the 1975–77 events to some extent produced non-party political movements, local protest movements and civil rights activists.

This has led to the emergence of a new social class of mediators in the political process, generally called the 'social activists', who are often upper and middle-class of their social origin, but who identify themselves with the lower orders of society, a whole variety of social strata ranging from the untouchable castes to the destitute among the tribes and ethnic minorities. There is a new genre of 'movements' in India that, while having an economic content, are in practice multidimensional and cover a large terrain. This includes the high-profile environmental movements, the women's movement, the civil liberties movement, movements for regional self-determination and autonomy, and the peasants' movement. Other groups focus on peace, disarmament and denuclearization. Movement politics has appeared as the 'power of the powerless'. The coalition that brought the Janata Party to power in 1977 in many ways benefited from the widespread desire for democratic participation and access to the centre of decision making. The trend continues.

At a larger, systemic level, the rise of this new consciousness of civil rights provides a balancing factor to the potential for the growth of authoritarian tendencies and the advocacy of a muscular developmental state, committed to rational management and

modern technology. These grassroots movements also signify a new understanding of the democratic process, which has moved from an almost exclusive preoccupation with parties and elections to new issues that the political system has not addressed. The period of erosion of parliamentary, party and federal institutions and the decline of the authority of the state has been accompanied by the rise of new actors on the scene, new forms of political expression, and new definitions of the content of politics.⁶² The growth of local protest movements as a method for articulating interests and demanding administrative redress was facilitated by the wide acceptance of lobbying and contacting decision-makers, and other techniques of direct action such as forcing public officials to negotiate by ‘dharna’ or by physically surrounding them—gherao.⁶³

A survey of over 200 local elites in two Indian States revealed wide acceptance of collective protest to get state officials to listen to local demands and meet local needs. The perception of this ‘room for manoeuvre in the middle’ gives a new focus and depth to democratic institutions because it simultaneously acts as a sanction against official complacency and inadequacy in implementation while undercutting the appeal of violent revolution as a more effective solution to social and economic problems.⁶⁴ The growth of political consciousness and the mobilization of interests have created a situation in India where the level of legitimacy and sense of individual efficacy exceed the trust that people have in politicians or in their ability to deliver the goods. This creates the potential for instability because landslide victories can fizzle away at the first sign of failure on the part of the leader. This was the case for Rajiv Gandhi, who won the biggest victory the Congress party ever had at the polls in 1984, and then rapidly lost popular support when rumours about bribery by the Swedish company, Bofors, began to circulate. In a situation like this, politicians may attempt to escape popular wrath by recourse to abstract rhetoric and populist promises rather than concrete policy that might involve some sacrifice. The obverse side of chaotic populism is a dose of authoritarianism which offers to set things right and carries a disgruntled citizenry along with it. India has already had a taste of such methods during Indira Gandhi’s Emergency rule.

The above discussion helps pin down the causes of the weakness of organized labour in India. In the first place, about the interests of labour, just as in the case of students, peasants, women, tribals or any specific group, relative to their western counterparts, most of the time it is politics—more than the interests; of the group in question—which is in command. The unions are penetrated by political parties because ambitious politicians often use positions in student unions, peasant movements or labour unions as stepping stones in their search for a political career. The Pay Commission model sets the state up as the honest broker in wage conflicts between owners and workers. Rudolph and Rudolph explain how the Pay Commission model, set up to help labour, has in practice stymied the growth of labour unions.⁶⁵

India’s liberal labour legislation is yet another factor that explains the weakness of India’s labour unions. Under India’s liberal labour laws, any seven workers can form a union. This creates competitive militancy, fragmentation, and finally, weakening of the labour union movement. There are no strike funds that could sustain the threat of the general strike, which has been the main weapon in the armoury of unionized labour in western democracies. Besides, the oversupply of labour makes it harder for those in employment to look other alternatives because for the owners can afford to replace striking workers without much difficulty. In addition, illiteracy and ignorance of complicated labour laws on the part of workers make it difficult for them to defend their interests through proper channels.

Rudolph and Rudolph have described this phenomenon as ‘involved pluralism’.

This refers to the way in which the state dominates interest group pluralism in India. Involution refers to a continuing process and resultant structural condition, the excessive multiplication of less effectual units. ... Such replication not only weakens each successive unit but also weakens all units collectively and thus the activity as a whole. In this sense, more becomes less. Involution is thus a regressive, debilitating process that results in decreasing effectiveness or entropy, the reverse of evolution.

Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), p. 257

The landscape of interest articulation and aggregation, according to them, comes across as a case of ‘state-dominated pluralism’—‘An Indian variant of pluralism which is dominated by the state. It leads to the excessive multiplication and fragmentation of interests’.⁶⁶

The impression of the process of interest articulation and aggregation that one gets from India is thus that of a stalemated class conflict (Figure 6.2) where demand groups are able to express their interests without political hindrance. Short-term coalitions with multiple social groups competing against one another rather than polarised and stable classes locked in conflict has become the general pattern of Indian politics. Cleavages tend to be cross-cutting rather than cumulative. As such, interests do not cumulate to a level where violent conflict overwhelms democratic politics. The limited capacity of modern institutions responsible for processing them and the limited financial ability of the state to satisfy them are thus not endangered by the freedom that demand groups and parties must actively engage in the political process.

This has two consequences. First, the trade union movement gets paralysed. Second, by drawing new talent into the political system, the demand groups bring greater depth and resilience to the political process. The process does break down from time to time, as unrepresented and unorganized labour has resorted to sporadic strikes and violence. However, to date, these threats have remained localized and the federal States have been able to cope with this challenge, often with the help of paramilitary forces sent by the central government.

Interest articulation in the ‘new’ political economy—so-called because it involves the liberalization of specific sectors of the economy following the basic change in the economic regime—has entailed the liberalization of the labour market, introducing more flexible practices such as easier methods to ‘hire and fire’, bonuses linked to productivity, and flexible working conditions. Jenkins explains how India has managed

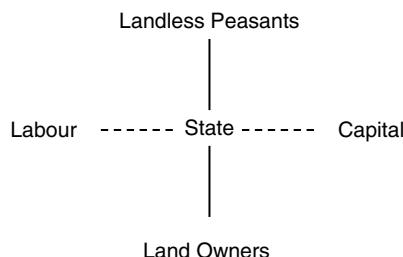


Figure 6.2 Stalemated class conflict.

Source: Drawn by author.

to achieve some spectacular results in this area through the combination of ‘big bang liberalization’ and a ‘special kind of gradualism’.⁶⁷ One specific measure he mentions is the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). Further, following the Chinese example, the setting up of Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and classifying them as public utilities which require their employees to give 45 days’ notice before going on strike, has become yet another practice to restrain militant tendencies on the part of workers. Some of these moves towards labour market reform have already got legislative recognition in the amendments of the Industrial Disputes Act (IDA) in 2009. Finally, the federalization of labour market reforms through competition among State governments to attract investment, both from national sources as well as multinational corporations (MNCs), has pitted India’s federal States against one another, and in consequence, has fragmented national labour unions.

The need to cut down on subsidies has now acquired a general if grudging, acceptance. Jenkins gives a number of other indicators. Thus, employers have increasingly had recourse to ‘de facto closures’ and have obtained permission from the government under section 25 of the IDA; labour disputes have also often been used as a pretext for effecting an ‘indefinite lockout’. The ratio of strikes to lockouts (in terms of total man days lost because of industrial disputes) has fallen from 54:46 to 19:81 over the 20 years from 1978 to 1997. The statutory wages required by minimum wage laws have started falling behind real wages; the powers of labour inspectors are being effectively controlled; and finally, VRSs are now being promoted in a big way by public as well as private sector employers.

Conclusion

There is a kaleidoscopic quality to Indian politics where the landscape changes continuously. Parties in power take turns with the opposition in ruling. Political movements emerge and dissipate, having delivered their message. Sometimes, they stay on, and transform themselves into political parties, and join their erstwhile adversaries at the high table of power. Post-movement, the ideologues leave or are eased out from active participation in the new order. In this process of churning, new, hybrid institutions are born, and new categories of politics replace old shibboleths. Bouts of noisy populism and protest take turns with orderly governance, and democracy spreads in depth and breadth, acquiring new acolytes and gradually, becoming the only game in town, edging out its rivals.⁶⁸

We have seen in this chapter how, despite the pressure on modern political institutions caused by rapid social mobilization, India’s political system has acquired a high level of resilience and voters have become increasingly more sophisticated.⁶⁹ Effective functioning of the intermediary institutions provided by the Constitution and their reinforcement through innovative indigenous institutions, and the two-track strategy of rational protest and effective institutional participation have made this possible. This is visible in political and social spheres as well as in the economic arena which will be taken up more at length in the next chapter.

The latest development in labour legislation and practice brings the focus back to the dilemma between growth and welfare that affects all post-colonial states, seeking a democratic path towards modernity. There is enough evidence to show that Indian labour

(and other interest and pressure groups) has learnt to adapt to changing conditions. Based on the multiple roles of the post-colonial state, and a dynamic, neo-institutional model of governance (see Figure 1.1), one can argue that overall those in the organized sector have not done too badly. The success in the articulation of interest by workers in the unorganized sector is context dependent. Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph provide a macro-structure to these concepts by referring to the multiple roles of the state in India. In their characterization of the state in India, Rudolph and Rudolph (1987) show how it has successfully incorporated some apparently contradictory values to create a space where different social groups can periodically negotiate the priorities for the politics of the day.⁷⁰ Generally, those in the unorganised sector, the elderly and the infirm, people living in tiny hamlets without connectivity have done less well. However, the combination of vote-hungry politicians, a pro-active state machinery, an interventionist judiciary, the media in search of stories, Non-Governmental Organisations—both Indian and those with foreign origin—reach out to them. The implications of these developments for economic growth and justice will be taken up in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 This is particularly the case in transitional societies where institutions lack requisite coherence and depth, which would enable them to resolve differences between groups with the same alacrity as in more established western liberal democratic states. Such was the pessimistic prognosis of Huntington in his renowned *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968). Naipaul (1990), p. 517.
- 2 Morris-Jones (1966), p. 455.
- 3 Morris-Jones (1966), p. 455. provided the economic basis of democratic consolidation.
- 4 The Communist Party of India (CPI) at that point of time was still committed to violent revolution. The ‘peaceful transition to socialism’ doctrine was adopted by the party, much later, in the 1958 party congress in Amritsar.
- 5 The campaign pronouncements of Varun Gandhi, an estranged scion of the Gandhi family and the BJP parliamentary candidate from Uttar Pradesh for the 2009 Lok Sabha election, were considered anti-Muslim and landed him in jail.
- 6 Following allegations of irregularity in the North Indian constituency of Amethi where Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was a candidate, the Election Commission ordered fresh polling to take place. Thus, one can notice both the political will and institutional capacity at the systemic level to minimize cases of electoral tampering.
- 7 For a detailed account of this election, see Subrata Mitra and Jivanta Schoettli, “India’s 2014 General Elections: A critical realignment in Indian politics?” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (July 2016).
- 8 “State-wise Voter Turnout in General Elections 2014”, *Press Information Bureau*, Government of India, Election Commission, May 21, 2014 <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=105116>, accessed 15 May 2015. The highest turnout in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election was recorded in the State of Nagaland (87.82 percent) and the lowest turnout was recorded in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (49.52 percent).
- 9 According to Election Commission data, the highest male turnout was reported in Nagaland (88.15 percent) while the highest female turnout was reported in Lakshadweep (88.42 percent). Female voter turnout (in percentage) was higher than male turnout in 16 States and UTs.
- 10 According to Election Commission data, semi-urban seats recorded the highest turnout (68.7 percent) followed by rural seats (66.5 percent).
- 11 For example, see Andrew Wyatt “India in 2013: Braced for an Election”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January–February 2014), pp. 151–64.

- 12 The Hindu-nationalist BJP started its political career as the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), which merged with some opposition parties in 1977, and became part of the Janata Party. It reemerged in 1980 under a new name, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
- 13 See Suhas Palshikar and K. C. Suri, "India's 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. Critical Shifts in the Long Term, Caution in the Short Term", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 49, No. 39 (September 27, 2014), pp. 39–49.
- 14 Rahul Gandhi is the great grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, and currently the vice-president of the Congress party. He has not emerged as the leader who could unite opposition to the BJP.
- 15 Senior Congress leader, Mani Shankar Aiyer's infamous and derogatory 'chaiwalla' or 'tea boy' comment directed at Modi and his background, served to further highlight the gulf between the two candidates.
- 16 Rajiv Srivastava "Will take a 56-inch chest to turn UP into Gujarat, Modi to Mulayam", *Times of India*, January 24, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Will-take-a-56-inch-chest-to-turn-UP-into-Gujarat-Modi-to-Mulayam/articleshow/29269342.cms>, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 17 See Palshikar and Suri, "India's 2014 Lok Sabha Elections", (September 27, 2014), p. 42.
- 18 For full text of the interview with Rahul Gandhi see: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Rahul-Gandhis-first-interview-Full-text/articleshow/29455665.cms>, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 19 "BJP's Manifesto or Modi-festo?", *NDTV*, April 4, 2014 <http://www.ndtv.com/elections/article/election-2014/bjp-s-manifesto-or-modi-festo-last-minute-changes-behind-delay-say-sources-504101>, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 20 For a discussion of this report and reactions to it, see, Victor Mallet "India accuses Goldman Sachs of political interference", *Financial Times*, November 8, 2013, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/5508f612-482b-11e3-88be-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3K5fnmJui, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 21 For the BJP's 2009 manifesto see, www.bjp.org/documents/manifesto/manifesto-lok-sabha-election-2009, accessed November 18, 2014.
- 22 For BJP's 2014 manifesto see <http://bjpelectionmanifesto.com>, p. 8, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 23 Ibid, p. 41.
- 24 For the 2009 BJP Election Manifesto see: www.bjp.org/documents/manifesto/manifesto-lok-sabha-election-2009, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 For a visualization of the gains see the maps in the BBC article, "India elections: Varanasi welcomes Narendra Modi", May 17, 2014 www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27451970, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 27 For full text of the interview see: <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/organiser>, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 28 Each was associated with the Ram Mandir issue and the campaign to destroy the Babri Masjid.
- 29 K.K. Kailash, "Regional Parties in the 16th Lok Sabha Elections. Who Survived and Why?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 49, No. 39 (September 27, 2014), pp. 64–71.
- 30 Ibid., p. 69.
- 31 Ronojoy Sen, "BJP gets a drubbing in Bihar", ISAS Insights no. 297, November 2015.
- 32 For the formulation of these ideas in terms of an analytical framework on elections and social change in India based on a model of electoral norms and organizational structures corresponding to them, see Mitra (1994a), pp. 49–72.
- 33 Vertical mobilization refers to political linkages that draw on and reinforce social and economic dominance. Horizontal mobilization takes place when people situated at the same social and economic level get together to use their combined political strength to improve their situation. Differential mobilization refers to coalitions that cut across social strata Rudolph and Rudolph (1967).
- 34 Kothari (1988), pp. 164–65.

- 35 See Weiner (1968), Mitra ‘Party Organization and Policy Making in a Changing Environment: The Indian National Congress’, in Kay Lawson, ed., *How Parties Work: Perspectives from within*, (Westport/Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1994), pp. 153–77.
- 36 See Mitra (1994b), pp. 153–77.
- 37 Khare, ‘India gives Congress and UPA a clear mandate’, in *The Hindu*, May 17, 2009.
- 38 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987).
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 See Mitra (2013a). ‘The Ambivalent Moderation of Hindu Nationalism in India.’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 48.3, pp. 269–285.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 For decline of the left see MSA Rao ed., *Social Movements in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978).
- 43 Durability has not been a common theme in post-election analyses and publications. See for instance, the book by prominent journalist Rajdeep Sardesai, *The Elections Which Changed India* (New Delhi: Viking, 2014).
- 44 BJP’s 2014 manifesto, <http://bjpelectionmanifesto.com>, p. 4, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 45 See the Ministry of Urban Development website for details on these campaigns: <http://moud.gov.in>, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 46 BJP 2014 Election Manifesto, p. 27.
- 47 The *Swachh Bharat* (Clean India) Campaign.
- 48 This was mentioned in Prime Minister Modi’s first Independence Day Speech, 2014 when he spoke about the rape incidents that had shocked the nation and the need for parents to educate their sons.
- 49 See for example, Milan Vaishnav “India’s Congress party: Down but not yet out.” BBC, May 17, 2014, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27452920, accessed 18 November 2014.
- 50 Rajni Kothari, *State Against Democracy* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1988), pp. 164–65.
- 51 See Atul Kohli’s edited book, *The Success of India’s Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 52 In their essay, “Can umbrella parties survive? The decline of the Indian National Congress”, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (2016), pp. 331–61, Adnan Farooqui and E. Sridharan point out that the decline of the Congress party is the result of a long-term trend which they attribute its desertion by social groups in many States which used to be its main support base. More than the flagging fortunes of a particular party, the larger question is structural. Farooqui and Sridharan suggest:

The larger question is whether a Congress-type, encompassing, umbrella party can survive the sharpened politicization of social cleavages, in the Indian case, religious, caste and regional cleavages since such a party will tend to lose out to parties based on religious, caste and regional identities in identitarian outbidding.

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- 53 Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph describe this as the ‘centrist multi-party system’ of Indian politics in their book, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1987), p. 58.
- 54 See Subrata Mitra, “The ambivalent moderation of Hindu Nationalism in India”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2013), pp. 269–85.
- 55 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987, p. 58) describe this as the ‘centrist multi-party system’ of Indian politics.
- 56 Morris-Jones (1966), p. 455.
- 57 Rudolph and Rudolph use the generic term of ‘demand groups’ to connote interest groups, pressure groups, social movements and protest movements which undertake this function. Such groups are a regular presence on the political landscape of urban as well as rural India. Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), p. 247.
- 58 In Western Europe, as the contradiction between labour and capital got sharper, means of articulation on both sides grew through representative institutions, critical social knowledge, reform and legislation. Workers’ wages kept pace with the growth of ‘surplus value’, unionization and the culture of collective bargaining.

- 59 See Kochanek in Rahul Mukherji, ed. *India's Economic Transition: The Politics of Reforms* (New Delhi: OUP, 2010).
- 60 Rudolph and Rudolph refer to the two phenomena respectively as 'state dominated pluralism' and 'involtuted pluralism'. See Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), pp. 259–89.
- 61 See Mitra (2011).
- 62 For a discussion on new social movements in India, see Omvedt (1993).
- 63 Mitra (1992).
- 64 Mitra (1991a).
- 65 See Rudolph and Rudolph (1987).
- 66 Ibid., p. 247.
- 67 See Jenkins (2004), p. 339.
- 68 However the following comment on the results of the Bihar assembly elections by Pratap Bhanu Mehta shows how Indian politics successfully recalibrates itself into the transactional mode. The electoral victory of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar is a potentially regenerative moment for Indian democracy. The sacred ritual of an intensely contested election that enlists enormous civic energy is a riposte to all those who doubt the depth of Indian democracy. The election may have had worrying moments of divisive rhetoric. But in the end, voters made a calm and calculated choice, unswayed by attempts to polarise them. This is not a democracy that can be easily fooled. Pratap Bhanu Mehta in November 9, 2015 10:54 am Indian Express, November 9, 2015: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/bihar-has-been-transformed-from-the-graveyard-of-revolutions-to-a-source-of-new-hope/#sthash.qcHbwfl3.dpuf>.
- 69 The excellent essay by Ashish Ranjan and Bhanu Joshi, "Rise of the sophisticated voter", The Hindu, May 23, 2016 helps understand how the voters' calculus have changed.

We are fond of defining 'political eras' in India. There was the era of Congress dominance after Independence, when the Congress was broadly unchallenged in its rule. There was also the era of Mandal politics in the early 1990s, when the Other Backward Communities (OBCs) rose as a political force in the country. The current political era has often been clumsily called the 'post-Mandal' era, which is more a description of what it has come after rather than what it is. When we look at our work in this election in the States of Assam and West Bengal, coupled with our previous work on Bihar and on the rise of Narendra Modi in 2014, we discern some regularities that define this era. The kinds of appeals made to voters have changed. So have the methods of communication. Voters are responding to the 'development agenda' and parties are finding new ways to use the media to reach them. More than anything, we are starting to see generational shifts in the way parties function, and this has become a fundamental part of understanding election results.

About incentives for voters, Ranjan and Joshi add:

The motto of "bijli, sadak, paani" (electricity, road, water), which has served Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan so well, remains a powerful appeal to voters. Roads are a visible manifestation of delivering development to voters. From Madhya Pradesh to Bihar, both Mr. Chouhan and Nitish Kumar have developed a reputation of successfully delivering good roads in their tenure. Building a road demonstrates a certain political power of a leader or party. From contractors to land owners, to coordination amongst your own departments, road-building in India is about control. At that level of abstraction, if a leader can build a road, it arguably does demonstrate a certain control over the system. At a more practical level, we cannot underestimate the power that a *pucca* road can have on the electorate. The road becomes their access to markets, better wages, and better social security, among other things. ...Mr. Modi's victory in 2014 and the BJP's ascent in Assam are excellent examples of why we see electors voting for coalitions hitherto considered impossible. This also speaks volumes about how and why the traditional framework to understand a voter only through his or her caste or religious identity is gradually becoming obsolete.... In Laharighat, a 45-minute cavalcade of the Congress' candidate, with young boys and men, passed in front of our eyes; the voters didn't seem that impressed. This kind of a campaign tactic was common in the pre-1990s, when voters had to be "visually awed" by the candidate. Now, voters know a lot more about their candidates and parties by just turning on the television. These types of tactics

don't work like they used to. Voters are becoming more 'sophisticated' because of greater information in the system. They are directly demanding economic development and infrastructure, rather than using identity politics as a proxy for these things. This is no random electoral defeat. In this election, the Congress and the Left Front in Assam and Bengal showed themselves to be old, sputtering machines that have yet to fully grasp the realities of the modern Indian electorate.

70 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987), pp. 400–1.

7 Economic development and social justice

The tragic fact of the matter is that the poor bear the heaviest costs of modernization under both socialist and capitalist auspices. The only justification for imposing the costs is that they would become steadily worse off without it. As the situation stands, the dilemma is indeed a cruel one.

Moore (1966), p. 410

Nehru's 'mixed economy' turned out to be a gravely flawed image of our future.... Nehru's blueprint of state-directed industrialization, based on publicly owned heavy industry and insulated from international competition was fundamentally wrong.... When ordinary human beings err, it is sad, but when leaders do, it haunts us for generations.

Das (2002), pp. 50–51

For the United States, it was the 1950s and 1960s that saw the first generation of these [Coke, Disney] global companies, in Japan, it was the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s and 2000s, it was South Korea and increasingly China (think Lenovo and Huawei). Now it's India's turn... We can imagine the world fifteen years hence and envision the skylines of major cities with names of Indian companies that will be not only leaders in their sectors but also pioneers in creating new business.

Alok Khirsagar and Gautam Kumra, 'can india inc go global?' *Reimagining India* (McKinsey 2013), pp. 344/351

This chapter analyses how post-independence India has coped with the dilemma of economic growth versus social justice. The demanding years following a century and half of economic stagnation during colonial rule (see Chapter 2) when rapid social mobilisation held the potential of bringing democratic governance down, the leaders of India have managed to hold the country together, keep class conflict within the boundaries of parliamentary democracy and produced the financial basis for democratic consolidation.¹ India's achievements are significant because poor countries rarely succeed in setting up a democratic form of government, and even more rarely, in sustaining one.² Nor do economic growth and transition to democracy usually go hand in hand. There is compelling historical evidence to show that the combination of extreme poverty, inequality and ethnic diversity is fatal for the survival of democratic institutions. An emerging economy with steady economic growth and a vibrant democracy, India is, in this sense, a counterfactual to this generalisation about the political economy of development in transitional societies.

As India has changed progressively from a colonial, agrarian economy into a capitalist, globalized country, the country's democratic institutions have held their own.

They have generated the political momentum that reinforces reform without upsetting the democratic and judicial due processes. Many had maintained that radical changes in India's economy and welfare would be unlikely if both are constrained by the liberal democratic constitution and the capitalist mode of production.³ India has defied the general norm. However, the robust confidence in long-term, sustainable growth (as in the epigraph, above) that one finds in sections of India's corporate sector has its critics. The diversity of India's political economy and the complex role of the state in balancing growth and justice call for a nuanced analysis.

Incremental growth and redistribution

During the long years of colonial rule, India's economy virtually stagnated, growing at the rate of 0.7 percent, which was not enough to keep pace with population growth.⁴ The picture improved markedly after Independence, but the rate of growth, at 1.5 percent net, earned the sobriquet of a 'Hindu rate of growth'. Rapid economic growth over the past two decades has transformed India's economy from a state of low growth to a level that has put the country in the company of emerging markets. India's economy has grown at an annual rate of about 7.5 percent (see some indicators of development in Diagrams 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3).

Though the rate of growth had slowed down to about 6 percent and inflation had registered a record high of 11.16 percent in 2013, with the economy registering a growth rate of 7.3 percent and inflation down to 6.07 percent (as of July 2016), both have changed for the better. Measured in terms of the purchasing power parity (PPP),⁵ India, according to the UNDP Report (2009) had reached the level of \$2,755 per capita by 2009. This has gone up to \$6,089 (World Bank 2015). In Asia, only the Chinese economy shows higher growth rates than the Indian, though more recently, India has overtaken China in the rate of growth.

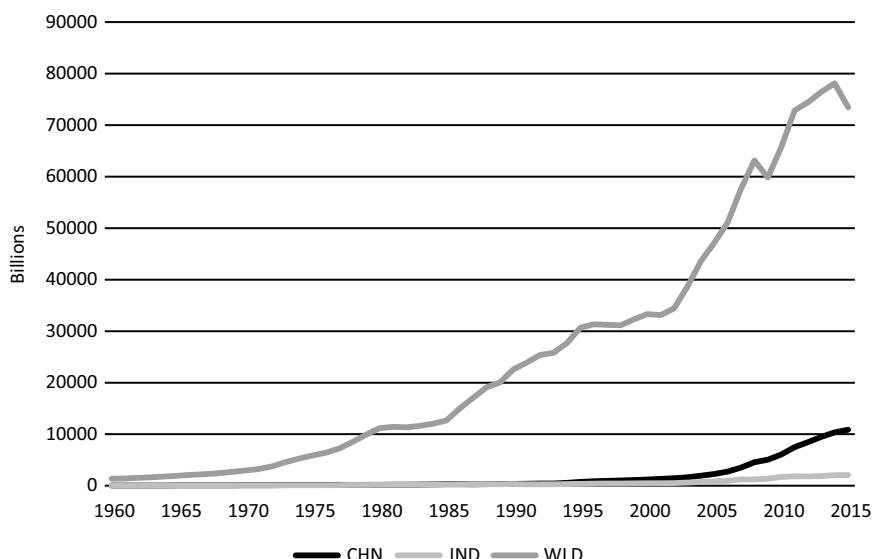


Diagram 7.1 GDP (current US\$) of India and China as compared to the world.

Source: The World Bank.

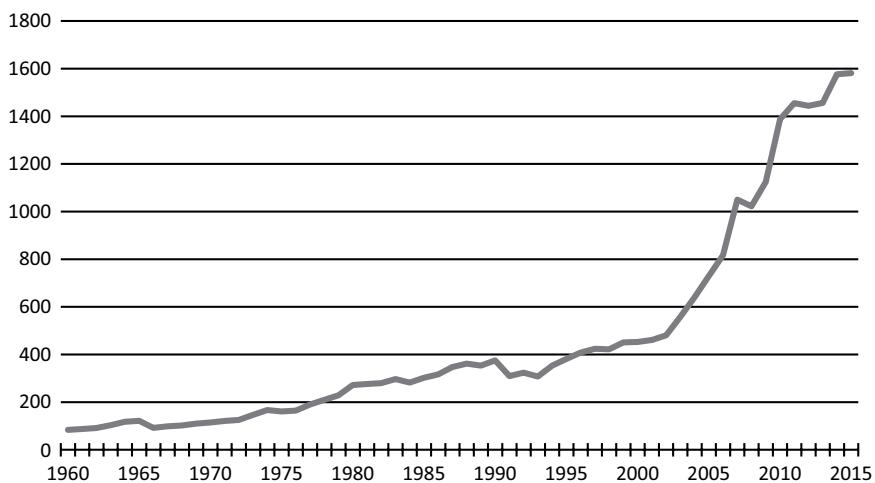


Diagram 7.2 GDP per capita (current US\$): India.

Data Source: The World Bank.

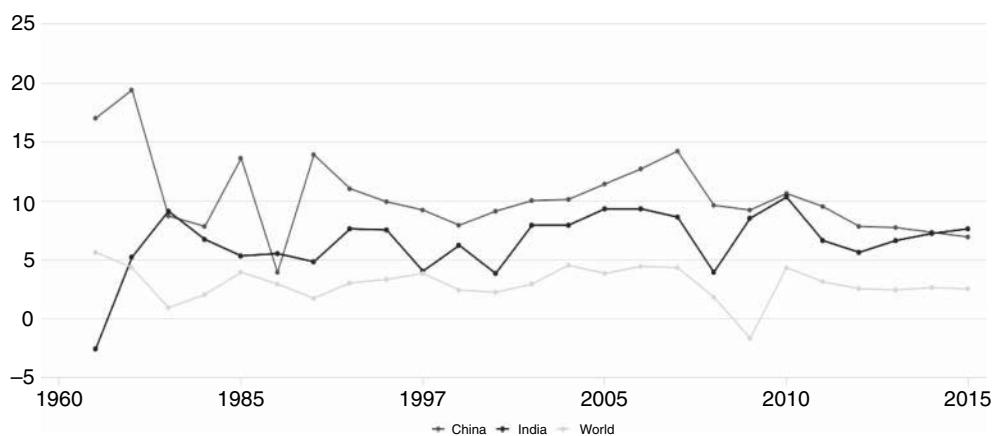


Diagram 7.3 GDP growth rate (annual %)—China, India as compared to the world.

Source: The World Bank.

Those with painful memories of the Bihar famine and humiliating import of food grains from abroad will take comfort from the fact that India is self-sufficient in food; has large reserves and a good public distribution system to cope with natural disasters and is even able to export food without jeopardising food security at home (see Diagram 7.4).

Economic growth has picked up momentum since the liberalization of the economy in 1991. The average growth that the Indian economy has achieved over the past two decades has stabilized at around 6 percent. Despite the financial crisis that affected most of the world in 2008–09, the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of India remain optimistic about India's capacity to sustain the pace of economic growth while keeping inflation low.⁶

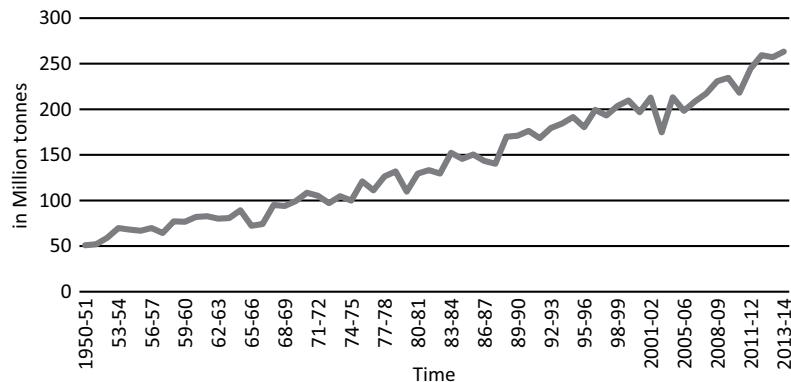


Diagram 7.4 India's food grain production.

Source: Author's Own.

Data Source: Economic Survey of India 2013–14.

Table 7.1 The human development index: India in comparative perspective

HDI rank	Country	Human Development Index (HDI) (2014)	Life expectancy at birth (years) (2014)	Expected years of schooling (2014)	Mean years of schooling (2014)	GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$) (2014)*
6	Germany	0.916	80.9	16.5	13.1	45,802.10
8	United States	0.915	79.1	16.5	12.9	54,629.50
11	Singapore	0.912	83	15.4	10.6	82,763.40
14	United Kingdom	0.907	80.7	16.2	13.1	39,762.10
20	Japan	0.891	83.5	15.3	11.5	36,426.30
50	Russian Federation	0.798	70.1	14.7	12	25,635.90
73	Sri Lanka	0.757	74.9	13.7	10.8	11,181.20
75	Brazil	0.755	74.5	15.2	7.7	15,838
90	China	0.727	75.8	13.1	7.5	13,206.40
104	Maldives	0.706	76.8	13	5.8	12,529.70
116	South Africa	0.666	57.4	13.6	9.9	13,046.20
130	India	0.609	68	11.7	5.4	5,700.70
132	Bhutan	0.605	69.5	12.6	3	7,815.70
142	Bangladesh	0.57	71.6	10	5.1	3,122.70
145	Nepal	0.548	69.6	12.4	3.3	2,374.20
147	Pakistan	0.538	66.2	7.8	4.7	4,811.40
171	Afghanistan	0.465	60.4	9.3	3.2	1,932.90

Data Sources:

UNDP HDI Report 2015. Accessed January 2016.

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report.pdf.*World Bank Indicators, data.worldbank.org.<http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

Although average growth is an important indicator of the strength of an economy, it does not tell the whole story at the level of welfare. The Human Development Index (see Table 7.1), which considers such 'output' factors as life expectancy, adult literacy, gross enrolment ratio and per capita income, are important indicators of the standard of living of the population as a whole.⁷ In this context, India's performance is one of

the best in South Asia, though Brazil, also a developing country, and China are better situated with regard to all these indicators.

Despite the rapid pace of the overall rate of growth, India remains a predominantly agricultural country, still with over half of the population dependent upon agriculture, though the marginal contribution of agriculture to the gross domestic product has come down to about 18 percent. Most people engaged in agriculture are marginal peasants with small holding or no land at all. Most these peasants draw their livelihood from rain-fed, subsistence agriculture. The economic legacy at the time of Independence included a small industrial base that, along with the business sector, contributed only 5 percent of the gross national product (GNP), standard measure of national accounting of that era. However, the weight of industry as a component of the economy has vastly changed in recent times (see Diagrams 7.5 and 7.6). Those fortunate enough to have made a breakthrough into mechanized agriculture, in the absence of a system of comprehensive crop insurance,⁸ remain vulnerable to the risks of bankruptcy, as one can see in the cases of farmers' suicide, avidly discussed in the Indian media. The needs of the economy in general and agriculture in particular, are not adequately served by the transport and communication network. India inherited one of the largest rail systems in the world, which did not link, as already mentioned before, the ports with the economic hinterland, but rather with the capital cities, reflecting the security needs of a colonial power. Poor infrastructure continues to be the Achilles' heel of Indian economy.

Though not quite as spectacularly as in China, poverty in India has come down significantly compared to the levels two decades ago in terms of the headcount ratio. According to a new measurement, Indians living on less than US\$1.90 per day are

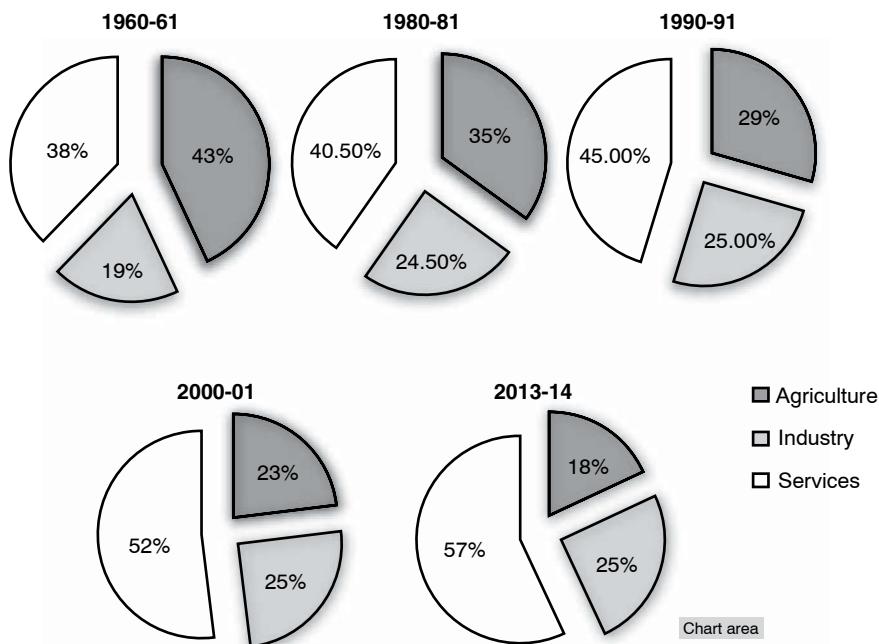


Diagram 7.5 The composition of the Indian GDP (in percent)—agriculture, industry and services.
Data Source: World Bank.

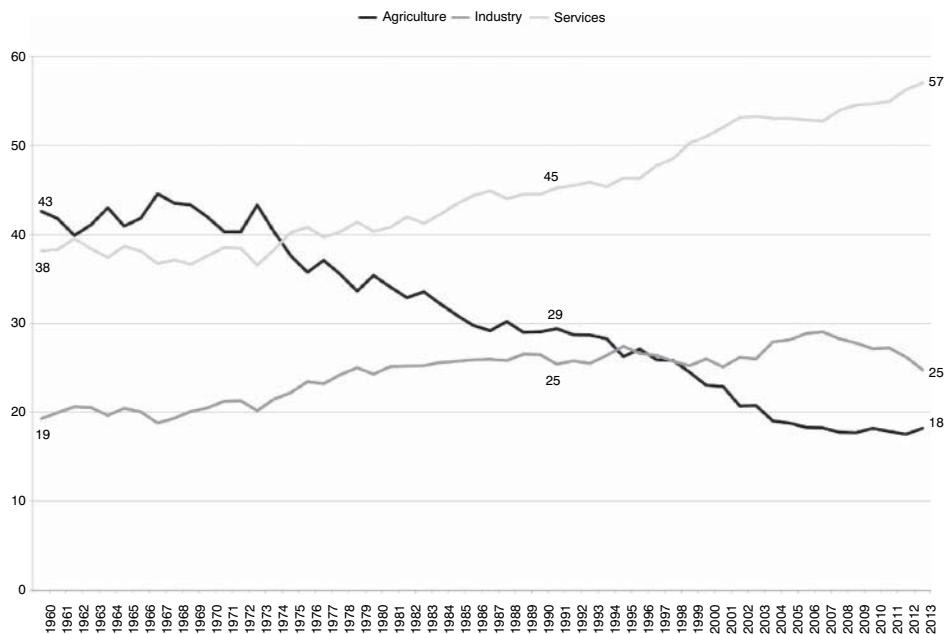


Diagram 7.6 1960–2014 trends in India's GDP composition (in percent)—agriculture, industries and services.

Source: Author's own.

Data Source: World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org>.

approximately 172 million (in 2015 this is approximately 12.4 percent of the population). This is a dire indication of the resilience of mass poverty.⁹ The picture is slightly better in terms of relative poverty, measured by the percentage share of the income of the lowest 20 percent as compared with the United States, China or Brazil. However, the poor performance on the indicators of welfare such as access to sanitation, safe water or infant mortality, further reinforces the picture of enduring mass poverty in India. India has improved on these indicators in the past few years but is still halfway behind China and other comparable economies. (See Diagrams 7.11 and 7.12 and the discussion of poverty measurement later in this chapter.)

Though nationalism and communal harmony were the main organizing principles of India's Freedom Movement, the removal of mass poverty through democratic means was always high up on the nation's political agenda as well. While the symbolic articulation of this commitment to the welfare of the poor came from the austere lifestyle of Mahatma Gandhi, the anti-poverty programmes came from the Congress socialists, whose main leader was Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

The economy, and post-independence politics and policy

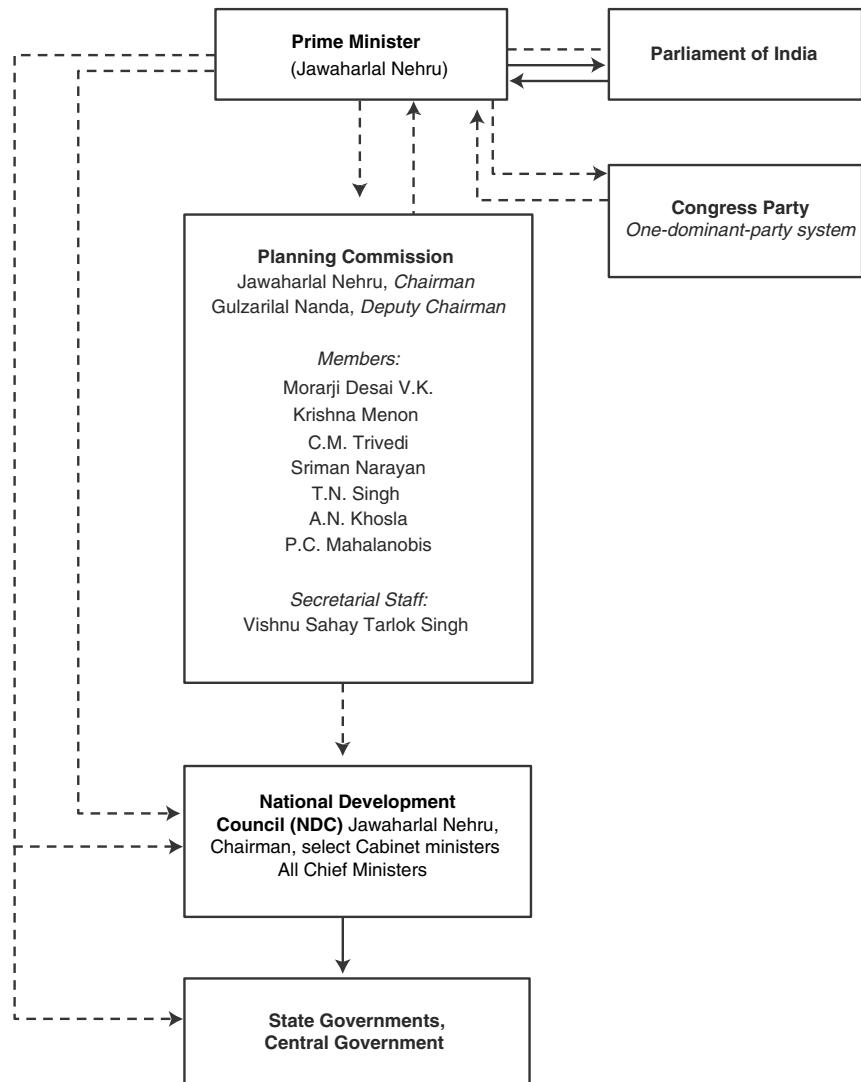
Upon taking power after Independence, the Congress government worked to create a *mixed economy* in which the state engaged in building the infrastructure and key industries. The private sector was to focus on manufacturing and distribution. National

planning, conceived by technocrats but under the guidance of key members of the central cabinet and the state chief ministers who constituted the National Development Council, was charged with balancing the needs of growth with the imperative of social justice and redistribution. Besides introducing new notions of entitlement, the constitution promised a life of dignity and economic opportunity to the underprivileged, particularly to the former untouchables and tribal population. But while development remained high on the agenda, it was not placed outside the political arena as occurred in ‘developmental’ states¹⁰ like Japan or South Korea, where development policy became the preserve of a technocratic and financial elite. In India, not only was economic policy an integral part of national and regional politics, but institutions like the Planning Commission, and the adoption of a mixed economy as the framework of development, guaranteed that economic policy was not shifted outside public control and democratic accountability. This model of democratic planning (Figure 7.1) was further reinforced by several reforms that protected the rights of workers, extended electoral democracy up to the village councils (as part of the integrated Panchayati Raj system that connects the locality to the region and the national state), removed intermediary rights of large landlords (*zamindars*) and princely rulers, and attempted to introduce land ceilings and cooperative farming.¹¹

Because of these policies, Indian development during the early decades after Independence, though unspectacular in any specific area, nevertheless strengthened India’s modern political institutions, eliminated famine and reliance on imported food in the span of one generation. The first gains came in the 1950s through an expansion of the area under cultivation and irrigation works. The 1960s accelerated agrarian production through a series of technical innovations like seeds of a high-yielding variety, new pesticides, chemical fertilizers and precise information on weather and market conditions. This ‘Green Revolution’ transformed India from a net importer of food to a country that was self-sufficient. Through the 1970s the government developed a complex system of storage and market interventions called ‘Food Procurement’ at guaranteed prices to maintain a steady flow of food production and supply to consumers. India’s food policy, which evolved in reaction to chronic food shortage, necessitating food imports that meant huge financial and political costs, particularly during the Vietnam War when the Indian position was opposed to that of the United States, finally started yielding rich dividends in the 1980s. India’s system of food security became so resilient that even the severe droughts of 1987 did not lead to significant fluctuations in the prices of agricultural commodities.¹²

The modernizing leadership around Nehru intended to raise the general standard of living and protect the country’s newly won freedom through a mixed economy. This model, based on import substitution, planned economic development, and a policy of self-reliance did not leave much scope for integration with the international market. In part this reflected a certain Gandhian nostalgia for *swadeshi*—the consumption of goods made in India—but also a basic distrust of the capitalist West. Bitter memories of colonial rule underpinned this deep antipathy.

The lesson was not lost on the generation of leaders led by Nehru who saw economic development as the most important programme of the post-colonial state. Thanks to the developmental initiatives undertaken after Independence, during the period from 1950–51 to 1990–91 India managed to more than double the size of its economy. However, while its growth rate was well above pre-Independence levels, it fell far below



→ Formal influence/power over

→ Informal influence over/or recommending function towards

— Joint membership of personnel

Figure 7.1 Structure, process and power in planning under Nehru, 1953.
Source: Drawn by author.

expectations. India was considerably below the 8–10 percent level of the fastest-growing parts of Asia—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore—and lagged substantially behind China.

Despite its poor performance relative to worldwide economic growth, India did achieve some spectacular results. By the late 1980s, the industry contributed 24.5 percent of the Indian GDP. Despite the low level of industrialization, thanks to the sheer size of the economy, by the mid-1980s India was one of the 20 most industrialized nations in terms of total industrial production. India was by then self-sufficient in consumer goods and in basic commodities like steel and cement. It also produced a range of intermediate-level manufactured goods, ships, locomotives, trucks, machine tools and sophisticated electronic equipment. In a departure from its classic patterns of international trade based on primary exports, India had started a modest export of manufactured goods. However, the slowing down of India's economy and the visible inefficiency of the basic model of import substitution became compelling factors for radical change.

The model of planned development based on a mixed economy, where the 'commanding heights' of the economy were dominated by the public sector, did achieve a certain amount of welfare but produced some less desirable side-effects as well. While state control over the market managed to simultaneously keep inflation and budget deficits low by the standards of developing countries, the system created what came to be known as a 'Quota Permit Raj'¹³ and generated unrestrained corruption and inefficiency, all but blowing out the spirit of enterprise.¹⁴ The result was a general slowing down of growth, which the government tried to stimulate in the early 1980s by borrowing from the international market, without, however, bringing about any radical changes in the structure of the management of the economy. The result was a serious financial crisis by the end of the 1980s. Most alarmingly for India's policy makers and the international financial establishment, the debt to GDP ratio of India went up by 100 percent in the span of a decade. In 1991 Manmohan Singh, then Finance Minister, with strong political backing of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, introduced the first structural reform of the economy that subsequently came to be known as 'liberalization'.¹⁵

The first policies introduced by Manmohan Singh were aimed at a drastic reduction of state control over the market, whether open or disguised. The government reduced subsidies on several items and relaxed strict import and export controls. The system of licensing new industries and closing those which were no longer profitable but could not be closed because of labour protection legislation was modified to bring a new flexibility regarding the market. Areas of production which the government had brought under its control during the high period of nationalization in the 1970s under the concept of 'essential commodities' were gradually released back to the market, and important areas of production such as electricity generation, parts of the oil industry, domestic air transport, roads and some telecommunications were opened up for private initiative. The government welcomed foreign investment and participation in the process of production through 'joint ventures' that permitted part ownership to foreign entrepreneurs. India attempted to make the domestic market attractive for foreign investors by lowering tariffs in a significant departure from the previous policy of import substitution and autarky. There was an easing of imports and Singh attempted to encourage exports through the devaluation of the rupee by 24 percent in 1991. The rupee was also made partly convertible. The heavy taxes on entrepreneurs were gradually reduced, as was the direct tax on income. The top rate of income tax came down from over 50 percent to 40 percent from 1992–95 to 30 percent in 2016 and corporate tax from 38 percent in 2001 to 34.61 percent in 2016.¹⁶

These measures were reinforced by a communication revolution that saw a deregulation of broadcasting in India. This made it possible for Indian consumers to have easy access to foreign-made televisions and radios, and to hitherto unavailable programmes through satellite and cable channels. The state broadcasting itself took on the challenge and introduced a modest degree of variety through internal competition.

In some ways, the fiscal policies of 1991 to liberalize the economy and implement a policy of privatization of public sector undertakings went against a long-established tradition of state control over the economy in India. As far as ancient Indian tradition goes, the *Arthashastra*¹⁷—one of the earliest texts on statecraft in India—had allocated several key sectors of the economy to the exclusive authority of the King. This tradition of state monopoly was continued by practically all the rulers of India, coming to a peak under British colonial rule. Indian commercial and industrial entrepreneurs had objected to the British monopoly and colonial obstacles to the expansion of their activities, and had enthusiastically supported the *swadeshi* programme of Mahatma Gandhi. They were content after Independence to find a secure niche for their products within the structure of the mixed economy. Each obstacle to free enterprise was also the visible tip of a powerful vested interest. As such, it came as no surprise that attempts to roll back the state produced a powerful backlash from a formidable coalition. Groups that informally came together included socialists who wanted to protect the poor and underprivileged from the devastation of capitalism, rich farmers who feared the loss of government subsidies, the *swadeshi* lobby, which was apprehensive about the loss of Indian political autonomy and cultural identity, and some regional leaders who feared the growing gap between rich and poor parts of India without the presence of a powerful redistributive centre.¹⁸ Liberalization sparked off a heated debate among India's political parties. India's communist parties, which have not gone through the process of de-Stalinization that marked their European counterparts following the decline of the Soviet Union, predictably came out with a firm opposition to the liberalization of trade regulations.

These reforms were an attempt by the international financial establishments like the IMF and the World Bank to dictate terms to India. They demand that the entry of foreign capital be governed by the technological 'needs' of India, which are presumably to be determined by India's planners. For the Left, the public sector and especially public sector employment needed to be defended against attempts at privatization that could lead to job losses. The Congress party, which had introduced the liberalization measures in the first place, was cautious in the defence of liberalization, having sensed its lack of electoral appeal. The BJP, which had traditionally drawn support from the trading communities and the better-educated urban populations, took a complex position on this whole issue. The party manifesto called for 'full liberalization and calibrated globalization'; it argued in favour of initiative and enterprise but wanted to retain the role of the state in protecting national industry and trade against 'unfair' international competition. The BJP also intended to exclude foreign intrusion from areas crucial to India's security interests, and foreign competition from consumer goods industries (using catchy slogans like 'computer chips yes, potato chips no').

In a context where coalitional politics is overly sensitive to popular mood swings, the uncertain feelings of the electorate are also reflected in the radical fluctuations of public policy. It was, therefore, remarkable that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance¹⁹ (NDA) government continued the policy of liberalization started by its predecessor in spite of the opposition among its ranks. In the wake of the nuclear tests of 1998, when sanctions against India threatened to restrain its economic growth, the BJP government

sent its top trouble-shooters to the finance capitals of the world and sought to salvage the situation by clearing the applications for joint ventures with accelerated speed. These efforts were partly neutralized by the nationalist euphoria created by the spectacle of India ‘standing up’ to the West, which some elements of the cultural-nationalist parties interpreted as the right moment to throw foreign products out of India. Still, the NDA government kept the momentum of liberalization intact, but the electoral dividends it had expected from its ‘India Shining’ campaign to illustrate its achievements did not materialize. In any case, following the electoral defeat of the NDA in 2004, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition kept the course of liberalization under the adroit leadership of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the original architect of India’s liberalization in 1991, and Finance Minister Chidambaram, who was closely associated with Singh during the initial steps away from India’s command economy. Going by the record of the past years, both became quite skilful at balancing the pressure of a significant contingent of communists in the ruling coalition with the steady stream of successive reform. This kind of complex balancing continues to mark the fiscal policy of the NDA government under Prime Minister Modi as one notices from the manoeuvring that ultimately led to the passage of the Goods and Services Tax bill through the Rajya Sabha where the NDA does not have a majority.²⁰

There are still problems aplenty: poor infrastructure, political wrangling over education quotas, deep pockets of poverty and illiteracy, and spectacular farmers’ suicides as a form of protest the side-effects of globalization. Nonetheless, a sense of euphoria about close to double-digit growth and low inflation was witnessed, and a widespread sense of opportunity knocking at the door. This sense of buoyancy is reflected in public opinion data.²¹

The long narrative of the evolution of India’s economy from its post-Independence, regulated structure marked by low growth to one which aspires to be a global player might give the impression of a smooth transition from the one to the other. That was far from the case. Transforming a colonial economy based on the exploitation of India to promote imperial interests and geared to the needs of imperial order and security into a productive, capitalist economy while keeping the structure of the democratic institutions intact is distinctive of the Indian case. This complex story of the transition is analysed below in terms of how a combination of planning, politics, coalitions of strategic policy-making elites and an element of chance helped transform the key components of India’s economy.

Distinctiveness of the Indian model of development

A fine sense of politics combined with attention to the requirements of economic growth and social justice are distinctive of the Indian model of development. The political argument that evolved over the course of India’s Freedom Movement tended towards social democracy and privileged social justice over economic growth. This legacy that deeply influenced the thinking of the leadership around Jawaharlal Nehru slowed the economy down in comparison to post-war growth worldwide, but it has spread the notion of entitlement widely among the Indian population. This, in turn, has given a sense of legitimacy to modern institutions and strengthened state-society interaction.

This widely shared concept of democratic development emerged from a series of strategic choices made during the early years following Independence. These choices, in turn, were based on a set of compromises that attempted to blend the experience of wartime planning and controls, domestic pressures for a policy of economic nationalism, and the liberal, Gandhian and socialist ideological cross-currents that existed

within the nationalist movement. The model that grew out of these strategic choices evolved gradually into a set of policies that became the basis of India's development consensus. The objectives of India's development were to achieve rapid economic growth, self-reliance, full employment, and social justice. It called for a system of centralized planning and a mixed economy in which a government-owned public sector would dominate basic industry, and the state would control, regulate, and protect the private sector from foreign competition. Foreign capital would be permitted, but only under highly controlled and restricted circumstances.

The Constituent Assembly which wrote India's constitution was dominated by lawyers, politicians and members of the liberal professions inspired by the values of Fabian socialism. They recommended social change and economic development as the normative objectives of the modern state, and parliamentary democracy based on methodological individualism, as its preferred method of achieving it. Moore and others, who approached India from a leftist perspective, saw this as the basic paradox of India's political economy where the modern state and economy were pitted against the traditional society. This the leftist canon has seen as the root cause of problems of disorder, slow growth, corruption, and caste and communal conflict in India.

To understand the distinctiveness of the Indian model, which has made it possible for the traditional society to undergo radical change and economic development within a stable democratic political framework, one needs briefly to refer to the ideological environment of the 1950s that has deeply influenced the evolution of the Indian model. Two key concepts—social change and economic development—were crucial to India's planners, policy makers and vote-hungry politicians. These were understood as 'significant alteration of social structures (that is, of patterns of social action and interaction), including consequences and manifestations of such structures embodied in norms (rules of conduct), values, and cultural practices and symbols'.²²

These key concepts were understood in the same sense as the European social history during the period of swift change which witnessed the rapid transformation of traditional agricultural society into the modern industrial society. The former was characterized by the predominance of ascription, multiplex social relations where one individual would play a variety of roles, a rigid hierarchical system, settled within primordial kin networks. A modern society, on the other hand, was one based on the predominance of universalistic and specific norms, a high degree of social mobility, specialization, and an egalitarian society based on association rather than ascription.

The framework of analysis of India's planners and policy experts was based on these broad definitions of tradition, modernity, and change. However, the political conditions of India and the attitudes and expectations that had grown around them did not fully conform to these premises. Traditional India was not identical to feudal Europe nor were castes—endogamous status groups based on hereditary occupations, and degrees of purity and pollution—equivalent to feudal classes. Similarly, democracy and social change—in contrast to the state of affairs in Europe during the period of accelerated capitalist growth—were not considered subsidiary to economic growth but as integral parts of a unified concept of development. These values and consequent policies were strongly promoted by Jawaharlal Nehru—the undisputed leader and spokesman of modernity in post-Independence India.

In retrospect, the elements that emerged as constitutive of the Indian model took on Indian tradition as much as imported notions of modern attitudes, institutions, values, and expectations. The caste system affected India's model of social change as much as the caste system was itself affected by the process of economic and political change.

In his seminal analysis of the specificity of the Indian solution to the general problem of social change, Morris-Jones (1987) has described this as ‘inter-penetration’ of the modern state and traditional society in India. Many political economists had predicted a state of economic stagnation regarding India’s attempts at democratic economic development. Why then, has India succeeded in achieving a generally peaceful and *orderly* transition? Rudolph and Rudolph formulate this in terms of the multiple role of the state, the relative autonomy of the state and state-dominated pluralism in India.²³

The influence of British colonial rule on the model of India’s political economy has been important, both in the material and in the cultural sense. Modern forms of production such as factories, mining, banks, audit and accounting, and securing autonomy of the market from political interference which characterised the state and economy of colonial Britain have left their mark on India’s economy. Less marked has been the influence on agriculture; tea and coffee plantations being the exception. But India, unlike other parts of the British Empire like North America, Australia or parts of Africa, has been selective in appropriating British ideas. India’s communitarian norms have set upper limits to profit as the motivating factor of the economy, just as interests of the needy and the socially marginal had continued to be a part of the agenda, surfacing with renewed vigour after Independence.

The legacies of colonial rule have emerged as the outstanding features of the distinctiveness of India’s political economy. These are the rule of law, bureaucracy, economic planning, citizenship, industrialization, legislative and political moves against ‘parasitic’ landlords (*zamindars*), modern political institutions, a two-track tradition of protest and participation, and a neo-institutional, dynamic model of governance. These factors have combined to generate steady economic growth and continued expansion of the democratic structure and process.

The origin and evolution of a mixed economy

The ideological reasons for the adoption of the mixed economy lie in the nature of Indian reaction to British rule. The ‘moderate’ strategy of engaging the British on the basis of a liberal political agenda, the ‘extremist’ rejection of this agenda in favour of a nationalist identity and economy and finally, the Gandhian synthesis of both characterized the course and content of Indian resistance to the British Raj.²⁴ The Congress party became the medium of this synthesis, and in the one-dominant-party system with the Congress at its centre as the framework of power, the successor state set about giving concrete shape to the visions of India’s future that had emerged during the last decades of the Freedom Movement.

After Gandhi’s assassination in January 1948, the debate focused primarily on the degree to which Nehru’s vision of planning and socialism would prevail. The debate came to concentrate on several key issues, namely, the instruments government would use in guiding the economy, the size and scope of private sector economic activity, the role of Gandhian village and cottage industries, the role of state enterprises, nationalization, economic controls, and the future of foreign capital. The strategic choices made in settling these issues were based on a series of major compromises that ultimately came to shape the entire economic system of independent India.²⁵

What did Independence change? The year 1947 was a great divide: the new men wanted to leave their ‘stamp on history’, and started off an intense policy debate within

the Congress party. The policy turmoil lasted from 1947 to 1951. During this period, Gandhi was assassinated, Vallabhbhai Patel died in 1950, communists rose in rebellion and failed, the Jan Sangha Party—the predecessor of the BJP—was banned, and the ban was subsequently lifted. Nehru felt strong enough to lift the ban on the parties of the Right and the communist Left and the Congress party went to the polls on the platform of a mixed economy, secularism and non-alignment. The strategic choices made during this period became the basis of the Indian model of development.

The mixed economy gave an institutional shape to the liberal, socialist and communitarian values that constituted the three main strands of the Freedom Movement and dominated the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly. The liberal values were given a clear and incontrovertible shape in the fundamental rights to the freedom of trade, occupation and ownership—Article 19 of the constitution. The socialist values were less explicit, but nevertheless clearly discernible. Instead of the concept of ‘due process’—an American practice that gave individual rights the highest value, defended by the Supreme Court through judicial interpretation—the constitution settled for the concept of ‘procedure established by law’ which made ‘national’ interest more compelling than the interest of the individual. This doctrine paved the way for land reforms and laws aimed at curbing the full play of capitalist enterprise. Articles 39, 41, 43 and 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy recommended that the state pursue policies aimed at bringing about the right to an adequate means of livelihood, the distribution of the ownership and control of material resources of the community in a manner that best serves the common good and avoids the concentration of wealth, a living wage, decent standards of living and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities for the entire population. Finally, even though there was no staunch ‘Gandhian lobby’ in the Constituent Assembly, communitarian values such as welfare of *harijans*, backward classes, women and children, village and cottage industries, educational and economic interests of weaker sections, cattle welfare and the banning of the slaughter of milk cattle found their way into the body of this elaborate text.

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 6 April 1948 gave a formal definition of the scope of the mixed economy. It suggested that public ownership would be confined to three industries—munitions, atomic energy and railroads. In six other industries—coal, iron and steel, aircraft manufacturing, shipbuilding, telephone and telegraph, and minerals—government reserved the exclusive right to start new ventures. Eighteen key industries of national importance would be developed under the control and regulation of the central government. Foreign capital and enterprises would be welcome but subject to government control and regulation. The resolution further announced that government would create a Planning Commission. Finally, in a symbolic recognition of India’s communitarian culture close to the heart of Mahatma Gandhi, the resolution asked the government to encourage the development of village and cottage industries.

The second Industrial Policy Resolution, issued on 30 April 1956, expanded the scope of public-sector development, guaranteed existing private-sector facilities from nationalization, and provided for their eventual expansion.²⁶ Three categories or schedules of industries were created. Schedule A, consisting of 17 industries reserved for development by the public sector, included mostly basic and heavy industries. Schedule B contained a list of 12 industries in which public sector investment would supplement private-sector development. All other industries were open to private-sector development.

The policy process under Nehru, 1947–64

The philosophy dominating the thinking behind India's planning was a mix of Marxism, pluralism, functionalism and Gandhian moral economy. Both in his thinking and in his political choices, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, helmsman of India's planned development from Independence until his death in 1964, embodied these norms. His choices also reflected a fine sense of the international context in which India was placed during this period; the structural constraints on India's underdeveloped economy, and the course of democratic social change on which India was set.

India's economic development required the structural transformation of agriculture, transfer of the agrarian surplus to industrial investment and the rapid creation of infrastructure. However, a professional and neutral bureaucracy of generalists and career civil servants was expected to perform this task. The contradictions of democratic planning showed them at their most virulent in the problems of bureaucratic implementation of democratic planning within a post-colonial, non-aligned, federal and parliamentary context. The Planning Commission was set up by the central cabinet on 15 March 1950, as an 'advisory' body. The Planning Commission was accountable to the National Development Council. The intention behind this was two-fold: (i) to make up for the implementation gaps caused by the separation of powers, and (ii) to establish a division of powers. However, the system²⁷ gave rise to corruption and inefficiency. As a result, the idealistic assumptions and expectations behind India's democratic planning were not fulfilled. The Industrial Policy Resolution was a carefully crafted compromise document that contained a series of strategic choices and established the basic outlines of Indian development. First, it envisioned the creation of a mixed economy and recognized that the private sector had an important role to play in the future economy of the country. Second, it declared that the state would be expected to play a progressively larger role in the industrial development of India. Third, it accepted the principle that private foreign capital would be allowed to participate in Indian industrialization. This participation, however, was to be regulated by the state, with a major interest in ownership and control normally in Indian hands. Finally, it held out the hope that a place would be found for the development of Gandhian village and cottage industries. In short, it contained elements intended to satisfy each of the ideological pressures in India.²⁸

The structure and functions of India's democratic planning, as depicted in Figure 7.1, reveal the main reasons behind the poor implementation of India's planning. Despite the theoretical attraction of combining the dynamism of private initiative and the stability that long-term public funding of key industries and the infrastructure in a mixed economy model represented, in practice it turned out to be otherwise. The Third Five Year Plan—judging from the buoyant language of the document, a great achievement of planning—turned out to be disappointing in terms of the real rate of growth (see Diagram 7.7).

Contrary to the economic logic underpinning this model, the assumptions about the availability of resources for investment, consumption and the consequent reduction of poverty were not sustained. The prospects of growth deteriorated further because of the lack of political support for the fiscal discipline that a planned economy required. Rather than a method of transforming the economy, the mixed economy gradually came to be viewed as a means of generating support for the political machine of the ruling Congress party. The need for patronage as a means of garnering political support arose because of the vast change in the political environment in which the party found

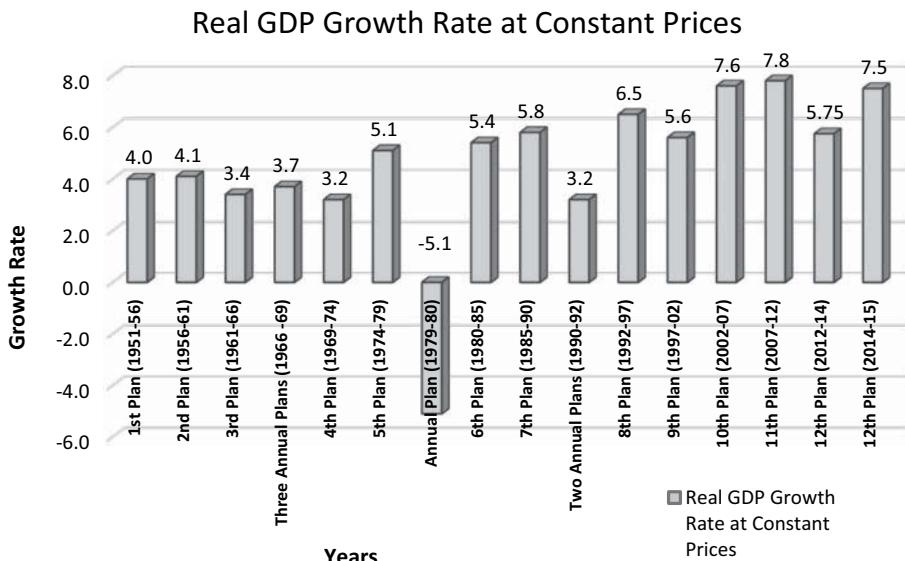


Diagram 7.7 Real GDP growth for planning commission five year plans, 1951–2007.

Source: Drawn by Author.

Data Source: Economic Survey of India 2015–16.

itself after Independence. The Congress discovered, once it acquired the mantle of the ruling party after the Transfer of Power, that it had lost a substantial part of its membership, including, in particular, a good number of idealistic workers. The void left by them was steadily made up by an influx of another type of member—people who valued the connection with the party because of the opportunity it gave to get close to those in power. This new vote bank quickly became symbiotic with the Congress-controlled governments which were the source of patronage, licences, quotas and permits and were responsible for new legislation. Those individuals and groups that had something to gain or lose by political and administrative decisions and policies were interested in closer connection with the Congress, and many entered it. In other words, from a membership centring on ‘have not’ groups, the Congress began to attract the ‘haves’—stakeholders of the new regime, those who would be affected by the decisions and policies of the government. The imperatives of the democratic rule also required the ability to compromise and live with contradictions, which is opposite to the aptitude for agitation and opposition most valuable in a revolutionary movement. Many of those who had led the Congress movements, particularly socialists, found themselves with a greatly reduced role in the governing organization.

The introduction of a universal voting system raised the number of eligible voters from 35 million in 1937 to 170 million in 1952. The effect of property and education qualifications of the 1937 election had exaggerated the strength of the urban electorate relative to its proportion of the population. Universal suffrage shifted power to the rural elements in Indian society because the voters reflected the population distribution. With the relatively ineffective means of communication to the rural areas, the parties tended to rely on establishing contact with existing groupings—largely leaders of

castes—to get votes. Thus, elections increased the political role of rural elites who could deliver votes. Simultaneously, the existing village leaders who were members of locally dominant castes and cooperated with the government, both to deal with local problems and to get favours for their villages, now had to work with the Congress since that was the party in power. Inevitably, there was a shift in power from more organized groups and leaders to those who were themselves rural or who represented rural groups. With universal suffrage, elections became far more expensive than earlier and the parties sought to attract support from these groups—largely urban—that could finance an election. Thus, new coalitions were formed between rural groups that controlled votes and urban groups that controlled resources for elections. The alliance became the social basis of the ‘Quota Permit Raj’, which is how the Congress party itself came to be known.

In the final assessment, what were the main achievements and failures of the Indian model of the mixed economy? Was it, overall, positive or negative from the point of view of economic growth, development and democracy? On the achievement side one can point to slow but steady growth; political and democratic control over the economy and transformation of the rhetoric of development into an element of everyday political discourse. The legitimization of this discourse is found in the fact that even the less privileged sections of society have some progress to report.²⁹ The most important gain was possibly in legitimacy, if not in growth. The mixed economy became the socio-economic base of the post-colonial state. In the final analysis, it might have slowed India down economically but it kept the country democratic.

India's agrarian economy: from subsistence to subsidy

Over the past 30 years, India's agriculture has achieved a Green Revolution which, jointly with a national policy of food security, has effectively eliminated famine. The Green Revolution is seen by the advocates of agrarian modernization as a paradigm shift from subsistence farming to modern agriculture, involving the use of high technology and credit, in an integrated production system stretching from farming, distribution and financing to agri-business. It prompted a gradual shift from the classic problems of Indian agriculture—fragmentation of holdings, insecurity of tenure, uneconomic units of production, excessive dependence on the monsoon, low unit yield, and rack-renting—to a modern agrarian economy. Scholarly opinion on the nature, extent and durability of the Green Revolution remains divided.³⁰

Many factors led to a re-appraisal of the agrarian policy in the 1960s. Massive food deficits in the early 1960s, famine in Bihar, and the difficulty of obtaining food from abroad without compromising the sovereignty of the country brought the planners to question the marginal role accorded to agriculture in the overall economic model of India. Besides the half-hearted attempt to abolish *zamindari*, no comprehensive plan for agrarian development had been made. Agriculture was seen only as an adjunct to the industry-infrastructure-led, mixed-economy-based planning process. Public intervention, in the case of agriculture, extended only to control over production, distribution and financing. Planners believed in the Indian model which allocated the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy to industry, based on planning, and the trickle-down of resources and new ideas from the tip of the pyramid to the masses, based on the felt needs model.³¹ Agriculture, following the classic model of growth drawn from the European experience, was the source of surplus capital, to be invested for greater industrialization, not the object of transfer of investment from industry. In India's federal system,

agriculture is a State subject, and as such, beyond the scope of central planning. In consequence, not much direct investment was made, except in the form of initiatives like community development, *zamindari* abolition, land ceiling legislation and cooperatives.

During the early decades after Independence as India went through three successive Five Year Plans, the main approach to agricultural development was dominated by two irreconcilable goals: 'The economic aim of achieving maximum increases in agricultural output to support rapid industrialization; and the social objective of reducing disparities in rural life'.³² One of the most difficult dilemmas arose from the obvious economic advantage of concentrating scarce inputs of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and equipment in irrigated areas of the country where they could be expected to bring the greatest returns in output. Indeed the selection of the first community projects in 1952 was guided by this consideration. They were allocated only to districts with assured water from rainfall or irrigation facilities. Almost immediately, however, serious social objection was raised to the practices of 'picking out the best and most favourable spots' for intensive development while the largest part of the rural areas was left economically backward. Within a year, the principle of selective and intensive development was abandoned. The Planning Commission announced a programme for rapid all-India coverage under the National Extension Service and Community Development Programme with special attention to backward and less favoured regions.

The social goal of reducing disparities also influenced the selection of methods of agricultural development. The planners were inclined to give only secondary importance to the introduction of costly modern inputs as a means of increasing agricultural productivity. Instead, they devised agricultural development programmes based on 'intensive cultivation of land by hand—and improving conditions of living in rural areas through community projects, land reforms, consolidation of holdings, etc.' Indeed, the planners' strategy for agricultural development rested on the capacity of the Community Development Programme to mobilize more than 60 million peasant cultivators for participation in labour-intensive agricultural production programmes and community works, including the construction of capital projects. The crux of the approach—the major inducement to the greatest effort on the part of the small farmers—was the promise of social reform, held out by large-scale initiatives for institutional change. The highest priority was assigned to rapid implementation of land reforms, including security of tenure, lower rents, transfer of ownership rights to tenants, and redistribution of land. Meanwhile, state-partnered village cooperatives were created to fortify small farmers with cheap credit facilities and economies of bulk purchase and sale of agricultural commodities.³³

In retrospect, it was probably inevitable that a development strategy requiring extensive land reform and institutional change as preconditions for success should meet with powerful opposition from landed groups; and that in a political democracy, where land-owning interests are heavily represented in the legislatures, this resistance should manifest itself in a go-slow approach towards agrarian reforms. By the early 1960s, most legislation on tenancy reform and ceilings on land ownership had not been effectively implemented. Yet in the absence of agrarian reform it proved impossible to provide attractive incentives to most small farmers for participation in labour-intensive agricultural production programmes.

There was, in fact, no dearth of policies. Following the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta committee in 1957, Panchayati Raj was adopted as the overall administrative structure for rural development. The Congress party passed a resolution

proclaiming a modified version of cooperative fanning in 1959 as a goal for the future. But as Moore notes drily, the implementation was not at the same level as the rhetoric. The Community Development Programme took no note of the reality on the ground: ‘... official instructions to program officials in contact with the villagers made no mention of caste, property relationships, or surplus manpower in the village—in other words, any of the real problems.’ Though local elections, in some parts of the country, had some effect on weakening the authority of hereditary social notables, Moore found the experiment a dismal failure.³⁴

As a matter of fact, as early as 1958, lagging growth rates in the agricultural sector became a serious limiting factor on the overall rate of economic advance. By the middle of the Third Plan, years of relatively static production levels (1960–61 to 1963–64) convinced the Planning Commission that continuation of shortfalls in agriculture would jeopardize the entire programme of industrial development. Of necessity, some retreat from the social goals of planning had to be contemplated. In 1964, therefore, the planners announced, ‘a fresh consideration of the assumptions, methods, and techniques as well as the machinery of planning and plan implementation in the field of agriculture’. Two major departures from previous policy were initiated because of this re-evaluation:

- 1 Development efforts would be subsequently concentrated in the 20–25 percent of the cultivated area where supplies of assured water created ‘fair prospects of achieving rapid increases in production’ and
- 2 Within these areas, there would be systematic effort to extend the application of science and technology, including the adoption of better implements and more scientific methods to raise yields.

In October 1965, the new policy was put into practice when 114 out of 325 districts were selected for an Intensive Agricultural Areas Programme (IAAP). A model for the new approach already existed in the 15 districts taken up under the pilot Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP), beginning in 1961. Initially pioneered by the Ford Foundation, the IADP emphasized the necessity of providing the cultivator with a complete ‘package of practices’ to increase yields, including credit, modern inputs, price incentives, marketing facilities and technical advice.

The economic rationale of an intensive agricultural areas programme was considerably strengthened by the technical breakthrough reported from Taiwan and Mexico in 1965 of the development of new varieties of paddy and wheat seeds, with yield capacities of 5,000–6,000 pounds per acre—almost double the maximum potential output of indigenous Indian varieties, and also by the development at Indian research stations in the late 1950s of higher-yielding hybrid varieties of maize, *bajra* and *jowar*. In all cases, the availability of controlled irrigation water and the application of the package of modern inputs, especially very high doses of chemical fertilizer and pesticides, were essential preconditions for realizing maximum yield potential. By November 1965, the Food Ministry was ready with a full-blown version of the New Strategy; in essence, it called for the implementation of a High-yielding Varieties Programme in districts that had already been selected for intensive development under the IADP and IAAP schemes, following the same extension concepts embodied in the Package Programme.

The missing link in the chain of agrarian production was soon identified in the person of the ‘progressive farmer’.³⁵ These link men, with some measure of literacy,

contacts with the world outside and enough status within the local society to arouse the trust of their fellow men, caught the imagination of the bureaucracy responsible for producing results. Soon, in various parts of the country, the liaison of the progressive farmer and the VLW (Village Level Workers, also known as *gram sahayaks*) produced a critical mass which cut through the local ‘bottlenecks’—to use a favourite jargon of Indian planners—and the Green Revolution was born. The statistics of food production tell the story of the agrarian political economy in a nutshell. By 1966–71, food production had increased massively. In 1972–75, bad weather conditions led to the decline of food production to 101 million tons, causing imports of 7.41 million tons. By 1975–76, however, thanks to good weather, production went up to 116 million tons.

The Green Revolution was marked by the introduction of a new group of actors—the ‘bullock capitalists’—into the political arena. Agrarian entrepreneurs, these farmers from the middle and backward castes quickly learnt to combine their numbers, social network and political contacts to garner power in local institutions. They formed farmers’ parties and movements to promote their interests—in subsidized energy, loans, agrarian inputs and slowing down the trends towards collective farming.³⁶

Overall, the Green Revolution is considered to have been a mixed legacy. On the positive side, it certainly contributed to the improvement of the quality and quantity of food supply, self-sufficiency and the Public Distribution System (PDS).³⁷ On the negative side, increasing volumes of agrarian subsidies have become a drain on the public exchequer. Increasing prosperity on the part of the rural rich and their lifestyles based on conspicuous consumption has widened the gap between the rural haves and have-nots, exacerbating class conflict, both of the right and the left. However, *kisan* movements cutting across regions and social classes have mitigated the worst. Finally, with technological progress has come its pathology—in the form of growing pollution, terminal decline of local resources and degradation of local biodiversity.³⁸ Most of all, many on the left argue that the conviction that agrarian problems of productivity can be solved through technology and massive investment distracted attention from the imperative of land reform.

The dilemma of democratic land reform

The post-colonial state and popular democracy, with their commitment to fundamental rights, to property on the one hand and social justice and empowerment of marginal groups on the other, have been both a stimulant for and a constraint on land reform in India. In view of its centrality to India’s political discourse, land reform is one of the most discussed problems of India’s political economy. Every major author or policy maker active in this field has felt obliged to respond to the reality of millions of insecure, indebted peasants under the constant threat of a bad monsoon, illness, and pestilence, by offering a diagnosis and a solution. Unlike capital, land is static, concrete and visible, giving the impression of being more accessible to political control from above. As such, land reforms, already on the agenda of the colonial government and the Congress movement that opposed it, have attracted the attention of all shades of reformers. This section defines the concept, and summarizes the measures taken, engages in an evaluation and develops broad questions about the political gains and economic costs of land reforms in India.

Though the rhetoric of land reform in India has consistently revolved around the slogan of ‘land to the tiller’, in practice land reform has meant more than the transfer

of property rights to the poor. The broad range of meanings grouped together under this generic concept has included legislation aimed at (i) tenancy reform, (ii) abolition of intermediaries, (iii) ceiling on landholdings and, (iv) consolidation of landholdings. Overall, however, India's land reforms have involved only limited efforts at land redistribution, implemented mostly through ceilings on land holding. The Agrarian land belongs to the State List under the federal division of powers. As such, State legislation aimed at regulating tenancies, improving tenurial security and reducing the power of absentee landlords and intermediaries has been the most common method.

Independent India inherited a complex and diverse system of land tenure from the British Raj. Das reports (Pushpendra and Sinha 2000) that in 1947, Indian agricultural land was administered under three systems: *zamindari* (57 percent)—*zamindars* were also known as *talukdars*, *jagirdars* and *malguzars*—*raiyatwari* (38 percent) and *mahalwari* (5 percent). Between the *zamindars* and the tillers, there was a layer of intermediaries numbering up to 50 in some places.³⁹ These *zamindars* used to collect several times the intended revenue, though they had a fixed tax to pay to the government which was permanently fixed as land tax back in 1793 (rack-renting). This generated, in practice, a system which looked as shown in Figure 7.2.

Life for most people engaged in agriculture under colonial rule was precarious at the best of times. In addition to the exploitation by landlords and intermediaries, the money-lender was always in the background. What was left to the actual cultivator after the claims of various superior rights holders were satisfied was subject to the collection of unpaid debt by money-lenders. The mechanism for enforcement of this withdrawal of the great bulk of the product from the primary producers was provided by the new body of written law, the courts, the police, the promulgation of ordinances and so forth.

The main goal of land reform after Independence was to generate both growth and justice in agriculture, as indeed in all areas of the economy. This meant, in practice, to establish a direct relationship between the state and the cultivator and to provide the latter with optimal conditions of production. Following Independence, the autonomy to initiate legislation and enforce the new order, in view of the fundamentally political



Figure 7.2 Lines of control and exploitation in the zamindari system.

Source: Drawn by author.

nature of the enterprise and the diversity of conditions prevailing in the Indian States, ensured that there would be significant regional variations. The success of land reforms depended on several factors. In States like Kerala there was a measure of success because the potential beneficiaries—the rural masses—were highly organized, politicized and capable of fighting for their rights. However, as subsequent developments showed, under the watchful eyes of the Supreme Court defending the right to property, and the central government making sure that political unrest would not reach a level which would obstruct lawful governance, the autonomy of the States to undertake land reforms was quite limited.⁴⁰

Following Independence, all States of India undertook legislation for the abolition of *zamindari*. The main consequence of *zamindari* abolition was the creation of a new class of ‘rich peasants’, mostly from the cultivating castes, who took advantage of the provision for resumption of land under ‘personal cultivation’ (i.e. transfer of property—*bhumidari*—rights to superior tenants) to displace tenants-at-will (inferior tenants). In addition, the capital that they gained through compensation helped them further consolidate their hold on the agricultural operations and went into the making of the Green Revolution and bullock capitalists at a later stage.

The Rudolphs (1987, p. 314) describe the key policies that evolved in response to the double challenge of growth and justice, resulting from the interplay of local conditions and state and central legislation. The first policy regime, characterizing the agricultural strategy of the Nehru era (1947–64), consisted of land reform (mostly, the abolition of intermediaries between the state and the peasant) and the centrally sponsored and funded Community Development Programme that saw the whole village as its unit of operation and strived to improve general welfare. The second strategy, geared mostly towards improving agrarian productivity through new technology which began soon after Nehru’s death, continued till 1971. The third strategy focused on basic needs and income redistribution, began with Indira Gandhi’s *garibi hatao* (abolish poverty) appeal in the 1971 parliamentary and 1972 State assembly elections. The fourth was launched in 1977 by the Janata Party’s agrarian-oriented government. It emphasized rural employment and asset creation, paving the way for agri-business. However, the rhetoric of income redistribution and nostalgia for agrarian socialism continued to be voiced by vote-hungry politicians and intellectuals of the Left and got a boost with the return of Indira Gandhi to power in 1980. In the wake of liberalization and the scramble for setting up new industries, land acquisition became the new focus of politics of land. The contemporary situation is a combination of all these initiatives and strategies.

In the absence of a large-scale rural exodus and of manufacturing to absorb surplus labour, a consensus has grown that India will need to solve the problem of rural poverty on the land itself. Hence, ‘land reform’ continues to be on the political agenda still, after seven decades of Independence. However, the consequences of various forms of land reform have left their stamp on the rural landscape. The attempt to abolish intermediaries has generated some surplus land that has been redistributed. However, the overall consequence of reforms appears to have been a general reduction in the number of large holdings and an increase in the number of small holdings.⁴¹ As such, while reforms might have had some effect on poverty reduction, it is not clear if they have also contributed to the growth of agrarian productivity. As a unit of production, one learns from the limitations emerging from the Green Revolution, land has a particular limitation. Beyond a particular point, at a given level of technology, investment in agriculture reaches a point of decreasing marginal productivity. While industry also has

a point beyond which additional investment brings in lower levels of output, factories can take in more investment than agriculture before diminishing returns set in. Besides, the technological environment in factory production is more dynamic, justifying the case for investment to be made on a regular basis.

The debate between the advocates of land reforms and agri-business as the better solution for India continues. The First Five Year Plan (1953) expressed the commitment to redistributive land reforms in terms of a recommendation to the state to ‘reduce disparities in wealth and income, eliminate exploitation, provide security for tenants and workers, and finally, promise equality of status and opportunity to different sections of the rural population’.⁴² These sentiments have been echoed by all successive plan documents. The fact that *implementation* turned out to be the fatal weakness in the causal chain built into the structure and process of plans did not deter the Planning Commission, given an opportunity, from coming up with similar recommendations. The key point here remains that, thanks to democratic empowerment and India’s half-hearted land reforms, the message of a right to ownership, if not the capacity to make a profit out of the little parcels of land, has certainly spread all over India. However, this has also created the phenomenon of ‘poor’ landowners—people owning small parcels of land—who cannot put their land to profitable use, either because they do not have the means or because they do not see the need and hold on to their land merely as an investment, letting it lie fallow rather than rent it out, for fear of losing ownership altogether.

The debate on land reform has now become a part of the larger issue of the pace of liberalization of the economy. Some suggest that a more rational strategy for India’s agrarian policy would be to create legal mechanisms that would facilitate renting out so that one can retain tenancy in a rational and efficient form, while trying to avoid its exploitative dimensions. Seen from this angle, Indian agriculture can be positioned not necessarily as a drain on her economy but as a potential strength.⁴³

Liberalization of the controlled economy

Though as a policy the liberalization of the non-agricultural sectors of the economy has been far more successful than land reform, both have some strong parallels. There is the same complexity of conceptualization, polarization of opinion around them, and comparable uncertainty about their pace, sustainability and prognosis. Ubiquitous signs of liberalization hide the fact of its inner complexity both as a concept and as a process. Essentially indicative of a culture of enterprise rather than of control, the policy of liberalization shows substantial reduction in direct state control in terms of administered prices and regulation of economic activity. It promotes the market rather than state, lowering bureaucratic control as the main basis of economic decision-making. Liberalization leads to the rationalization and reduction of taxes, not necessarily on income but on enterprises. In addition, it leads to the privatization of state assets, downsizing public sector undertaking (PSUs); easing rules for foreign direct investment (FDI), allowing non-residents to hold domestic financial assets, providing easier access to multinational corporations (MNCs) and to foreign commercial borrowing by domestic firms, and allowing domestic residents to hold foreign assets. Further, politically controversial aspects of liberalization indicate the need to remove subsidies, restrictions on foreign exchange, travel, import and export and fiscal deficits, and to generally increase competition. Further, liberalization entails cutting back on public investment and certain types of social expenditure, trade liberalization, a shift from quantitative restriction on tariffs and, typically, reduction of export subsidies and moving to market-determined exchange rates.

The chronology of development policy since Independence shows that rather than being a sudden, radical innovation, the tendency to let the market play a salient role in India's economic development existed right from the outset. The period 1947–51 witnessed a policy debate within the Congress party regarding the role of the market in India's economy. The advocates of the market did not lose outright to those keen to give the state the leading role in development. In the end, the mixed economy, strongly supported by Prime Minister Nehru, emerged victoriously, but it did not exclude private enterprise from participating in national development. An implicit state-private sector partnership emerged during 1952–63 which saw the implementation of a model of development based on planning, political control over resources, import substitution, the public sector, and industry as the 'leading sector'.

There was a discernible shift to the right during 1963–69 when the policy debate was revived, and the rise of the Green Revolution marked a new, distinctive phase in India's political economy. The years 1969–73 witnessed a populist surge under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. However, once she consolidated her power, the tendency to let market forces assert themselves slowly set in. Even under the shadow of the National Emergency of 1975–77, there was, despite the radical rhetoric, a surreptitious and incremental liberalization. The Janata Party coalition government, which came to power following the electoral defeat of Indira Gandhi in 1977, once again saw the conflict of liberalism, socialism and Gandhism. The government fell back on the 1956 industrial policy resolution. Token emphasis was given to agriculture, cottage industries, employment generation and poverty alleviation. Indira Gandhi's return in 1980 brought back the commitment to economic development through industrialization. But cautious liberalization was swallowed up by bureaucratic inertia. However, surreptitious liberalization continued once Indira Gandhi was back in power (1980–84). Under Rajiv Gandhi, Indira's son and successor as Prime Minister, the policy of liberalization became explicit, though, at the level of implementation, it tended to be 'half-hearted' and lasted from 1985 to 1991.⁴⁴ The initiative to liberalize India's economy took the final leap towards becoming a full-fledged policy of the government of India under the congress Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. Following the massive changes in the law in 1991, India has developed a steady, bi-partisan consensus on the goals of liberalization, but with discernible inferences on the pace of reform.

The government of Narasimha Rao, which came to office in 1991 as a minority government after the Congress (I) won 226 seats in the Lok Sabha (thus falling short of the majority mark of 273 seats) in the June election following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, is usually given credit for the initial push towards extensive liberalization of the economy. India was then running a current account deficit of around \$10 billion. Foreign exchange reserves were down to two weeks of imports despite an IMF loan of \$1.8 billion in January 1991. The credibility of India's financial strength had reached rock bottom, and commercial borrowing had become impossible. Inflation was running at an annual rate of 13 percent and the inflow of foreign currency from non-resident Indians had been reversed. The crisis had been simmering since the mid-1980s with government relying on unsustainable levels of foreign and domestic borrowing. It was brought to a crisis point by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 resulting in a rise in the price of oil. The Janata government of V.P. Singh and the successor 'lame duck' government of Chandra Shekhar failed to act commensurate with the rapidly growing crisis. Immediate drastic action, including a large devaluation and deflationary fiscal measures were essential to prevent default by securing the cooperation of officials, donors and lenders. Many countries have been forced to take similar measures when the

borrowing that they relied on dried up. But the almost simultaneous announcement (by a minority government) of a long-run programme of deregulation and liberalization is not so common and calls for some comment.⁴⁵

A key element in the reform package was the New Industrial Policy (NIP), announced in July 1991. The NIP abolished industrial licensing for all but a select list of 18 sensitive industries; removed asset limits for companies that used to fall under the domain of MRTP—Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices—and eliminated phased manufacturing programmes. Further, it eased location requirements for industries; promised ‘automatic’ permissions for foreign direct investment up to 51 percent; increased foreign equity limits from a maximum of 40 percent to 51 percent; created a special board to negotiate with the top 40–50 international firms to invest in India; and developed incentives for small-scale industry and promised to begin disinvestments in the public sector.⁴⁶

This had come to be the case in India by July 1991. The change of ‘mindset’, to use a fashionable cliché, during the previous five years, had been remarkable, although it was also remarkably slow to come. For nearly 20 years any mention of South Korea or Taiwan resulted in signs of amazement that anyone might think that India could learn from such small economies. It was more than a decade since China’s liberalizing reforms could be seen to be highly successful. But at last, the total collapse of the Russian communist system must have, convinced many people that a highly-regulated economy with centralized planning was not a model to copy.

Is liberalization irreversible? The failed attempt by the Tatas to set up a factory to produce the Nano—reputedly the world’s cheapest small car—in Singur in West Bengal because of trenchant opposition by displaced peasants, mobilized by parties opposed to the Left Front government of West Bengal, holds a cautionary lesson for the advocates of liberalization in India. The forces opposed to rapid liberalization today are the Swadeshi Jagran Manch—an umbrella organization with core support from the (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—the main labour unions, rich peasants and the left parties. The question that arises is whether there is a national consensus behind liberalization and how to interpret the political objection to SEZs—Special Economic Zones—where specific facilities like loans at advantageous rates, infrastructure facilities and some relaxation of India’s stringent labour laws are made available to entrepreneurs. However, while the emphasis on the pace and the choice of location varies, there is broad bi-partisan support for the direction of liberalizations as one could see in the case of the recent Insurance Law (Amendment) bill, 2008 to liberalize insurance.

Globalization of India’s economy

As in the case of liberalization, democracy has turned out to be both an incentive for and an obstacle to the integration of India’s domestic economy with the global market. Just as in the case of liberalization, the issue raises the same questions about the definition of the concept, its perception by the Indian people and the pace of its implementation. Globalization is of course much more than merely an economic process because mere integration of the economy of a nation with the international market economy cannot necessarily be equated with globalization. That, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, is exactly what happened under colonial rule. A more appropriate definition of the process of globalization should necessarily draw on the values and interests of a much wider range of stakeholders than merely the integration of capital markets. Finally, one should

ask if globalization is a mixed blessing, and what might be appropriate for India in an inadequately integrated and poorly governed world.

With the radical reforms in legislation that the government of Narasimha Rao introduced in 1991, India took the first definitive steps in the direction of liberalization of her economy and its integration with the international market economy. However, despite the robust performance of her economy, there are many in India who are unsure about the future.⁴⁷

Definition and measurement of globalization

Many economists measure the concept as the ratio of trade to GDP. The World Bank, which defines it in terms of the ‘openness index’—trade to GDP ratio—(Diagram 7.8 and 7.9), believes that the progress of India is ‘slow but in the right direction’. The Bank recommends that India should stay the course and accelerate the pace of integration of her economy with the world market through ‘reforms’ and ‘good governance’. However, the international financial crisis of 2008 has brought back some of the initial resistance to the integration of the Indian economy with the international market, voiced particularly by the political parties of the Left. There is some resistance on the part of India’s Left and trade unions who fear job losses. Sections of the cultural Right are against further integration of India’s economy with the international economy out of a fear of losing autonomy.

Liberalization was an elite-initiated policy with little popular support or knowledge at the time of its original inception: it certainly was so after a full term in office by the Rao government which made it the cornerstone of its politics. Early responses to the initiative, measured by the 1996 survey of the Indian population, show the lack of majority support for both liberalization of the economy and its integration with the international economy, particularly through the agency of multinational corporations.

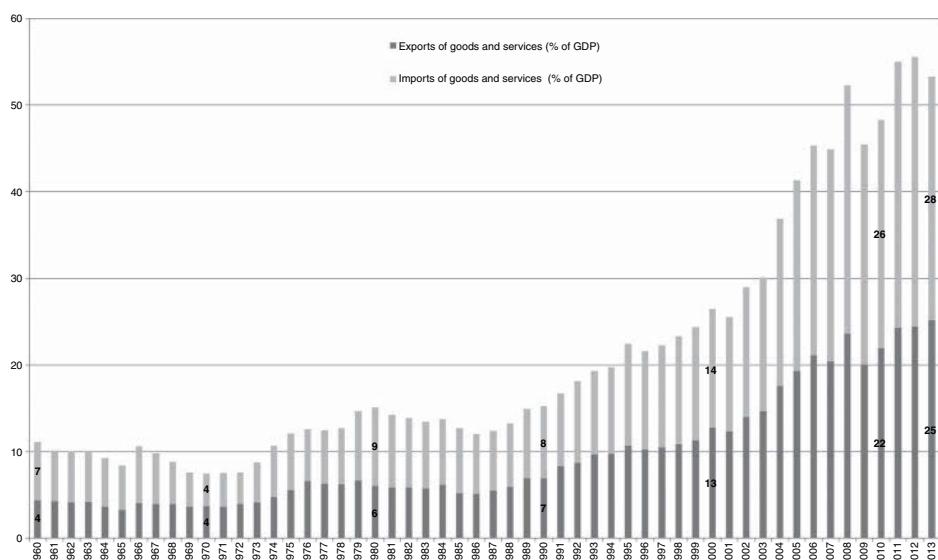


Diagram 7.8 Openness index—Indian exports and imports of goods and services (% of GDP).

Data Source: World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

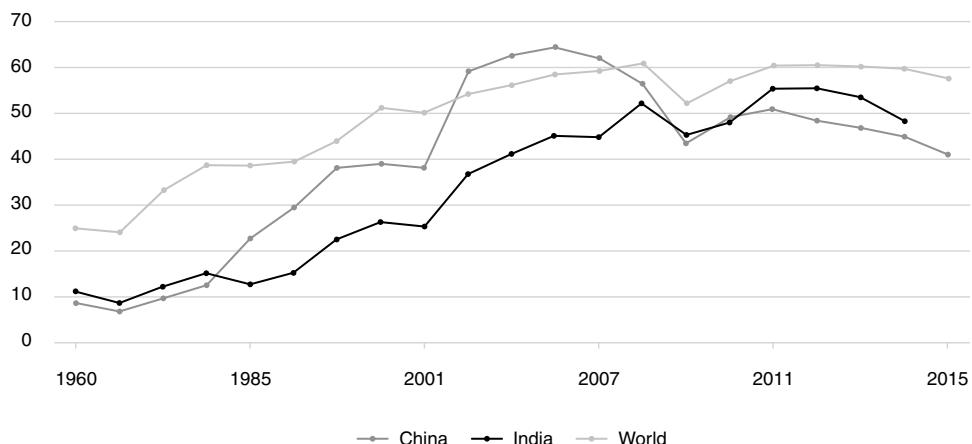


Diagram 7.9 Openness index: India and China vs. world

Source: World Bank.

In this survey (Tables 7.2 and 7.3), only about one-fifth of the population approved of the policy of integration with the international market economy, particularly regarding open access to multinationals, and 37.1 percent was opposed to this policy. Roughly two-fifths of the population were not aware of it or considered it so far removed from everyday life that they had no opinion on the issue. However, strong support for this form of liberalization did exist within some vocal and articulate sections of the population, namely, the higher secondary- and college-educated, urban, upper-class people and the high achievers. The second question, ‘Government companies should be given into private hands. Do you agree or disagree with this?’, was asked to test popular opinion on the other important aspect of liberalization, namely, privatization. The results show a marginal increase in popular support both for and against liberalization in 2004. However, in 2009, once those who somewhat agree were separately counted for—there is a decline in support both for liberalization and against it. The percentage of those without an opinion on the issue went down initially, indicating a growing polarization of opinion in India. It stabilized around 30 percent between 2004 and 2009.

The contrast between the reality of India’s economic policy and popular opinion is striking. Compared to the past, India has emerged as an economic giant, and the high rate of growth has been sustained over the past two decades. Major change in legislation has made it easier for Indian entrepreneurs to collaborate with the international market. However, the overall perception of the twin processes of privatization and globalization that made it possible in the first place remains negative. This shows the complex interaction between state, society and market in the context of a post-colonial society. The contrast between the patterns of support and opposition to liberalization shows the deeper dimensions of the problem.

The spread of opinion regarding globalisation appears to have remained pretty much stable during 2004 and 2009; remains almost stable, opinion being divided between supporters, opponents and, the indifferent and undecided, in equal proportions. One gets a similar impression regarding privatisation as well, where a slight decline in opposition to policies of extending private ownership can be noticed (NES 2009).

Support for globalization comes from international capital, on the look-out for best investments. Indian high-tech industry such as IT and other export-oriented sectors and India’s skilled manpower looking for foreign employment also favour rapid integration

Table 7.2 No free trade for foreign companies (in percent)

<i>Do you ...</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Disagree	21.8	30.1	15
Don't Know/No Opinion	41.1	31.1	31.2
Agree	37.1	38.8	18.7
Somewhat Agree/Disagree			35.1

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1996, 2004, 2009

Table 7.3 Privatize government companies (in percent)

<i>Do you ...</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Disagree	34.5	46.2	28.9
Don't Know/No Opinion	42.2	30.2	31.7
Agree	23.3	23.6	9.6
Somewhat Agree/Disagree			29.8

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1996, 2004, 2009

with the international market economy. Many have already learnt how to apply a form of ‘putting out’—as one can see in the case of tomato and green pea cultivation in Punjab—to take the maximum advantage of local conditions such as skilled manpower, lower wage rates, climate and subsidies offered by the regional governments, and connectivity and transport facilities that help link supply and demand. Citing the Chinese example, these advocates of globalization argue that the process can also become an instrument through which to challenge the exclusive Western domination of the international economy.

Gurcharan Das, a resolute analyst of Indian development, argues in the same vein that the integration of parts of the Indian market with consumers abroad—be it in the service industry or handicrafts—has brought new resources, technology and hope for a rapid improvement of conditions.⁴⁸ The combination of new technology and entrepreneurship can help entire societies make strides in economic development. However, there is deep resistance as well, which comes from India’s public sector, some private sector concerns which fear foreign competition, and the farm lobby which fears the loss of domestic subsidies and competition from abroad. These strident voices, avidly mobilized as part of the electoral campaigns by practically all political parties, act as a brake on rapid liberalization. In the process, the fact that globalization stands for the free movement of ideas and commodities across national frontiers and can, thus, become an instrument of challenge against western hegemony gets lost in the minutiae of current political coalitions and their links to external powers, national issues like farmers’ suicides, farm subsidies, labour legislation and international financial crisis.

Poised between *swadeshi* and internet, India has the potential to become a ‘bridging power’ in the next millennium. It has certainly reinforced the eagerness of a part of Indian society, more among the privileged than among the poorer sections of the population, to enjoy the commodities and lifestyles that one has come to identify with the affluent West. But much more overwhelming is the evidence of resistance from those likely to be worse off—at least in the short run—because the policies of privatization and the integration of the internal market with the aggressive profit-oriented corporate culture of multinational companies. Several NGOs are at the forefront of this form of resistance and critical discussion of the agenda of globalization. In a society where the

right to participate is taken seriously and popular support has become the sole basis of legitimacy, such resistance is bound to contribute to transparent, effective, legitimate and sustainable globalization. India, with her continued commitment to Panchasheela, her resilient democracy and multicultural society and with her new-found economic and military power, as Khilnani (2005) argues, can become a ‘bridge power’ in a multipolar world, able to ease the transition into a properly globalized world based on capital market integration, shared values, and a global civil society of stakeholders.

Business and government in India

An assessment of discussions about the state of Indian business and the role of government should begin with the question of how globalised the Indian economy is and the debates on how much further liberalisation is needed to stimulate economic growth.⁴⁹

India has emerged as the seventh largest economy globally in 2016⁵⁰ with a high growth rate and has also improved its global ranking in terms of per capita income. Yet the fact remains that its per capita income continues to be quite low (at the current US \$ 1,581.6 in 2015). The process of globalization has been marked by a rising share of exports (as also imports) that reached 27.9 percent for the world in 2010, with some countries showing a much higher dependence on exports. India’s export (of goods and services) to GDP ratio increased from 6.2 percent in 1990 to 24.8 percent in 2013. Yet India accounts for only 1.7 percent of world exports (2014). India’s exports are also evenly balanced between merchandise and services. Moreover, the change in direction of exports suggests that India has been diversifying the destination of its exports away from traditional markets.

The World Bank Study titled ‘Unleashing India’s Innovation’ (Dutz 2007) observed that India had increasingly become a top global innovator in high-tech products and services. Yet the country is underperforming in terms of its innovation potential. India spends less than 0.9 percent of its GDP in research and development (R&D), which covers basic research, applied research, and experimental development.

Regarding energy, India is faced with the fact that 80 percent of the crude oil consumed is imported, whereas the bulk of coal is domestically produced. Even with respect to coal, the country is importing on the margin to meet domestic demand. On the other side, there is a large fraction of the population that has little or no access to commercial sources of energy and depends on traditional sources.

Remittances are an important source of financial flows and, as per World Bank estimates, remittance flows into developing countries in 2015 were to the tune of USD 431.6 billion. In 2015, remittances into the country accounted for 72 Billion USD (3.5 percent of GDP) making it the largest remittance receiving country in the world, ahead of China. One of the reasons for such high inflows could be higher oil prices that helped the Gulf countries and other oil exporters, where many Indian workers are employed. The depreciation of the Indian rupee in the latter half of 2011 might also have helped. However, the volume of remittances is sensitive to oil prices, and are likely to fall with the prevailing low prices.

The need for further liberalisation

While India is still growing at a rapid pace in comparison to other countries, it should not deter the country from the opportunity to push through further reforms, create infrastructure and generate economic opportunities. Recognising the urgent need for

change, the Twelfth Plan doubled the projected investment in infrastructure over the five-year period 2012–17 to US\$1 trillion, taking annual investment in infrastructure from the current level of 6 percent of GDP to over 10 percent. Furthermore, the government has recognized that a manufacturing thrust is required for the benefit of the economy. This has led to the establishment of the National Investment and Manufacturing Zones—the green field integrated Industrial Townships or development of Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor as a global manufacturing and investment destination are thoughts to stimulate infrastructure growth using eco-friendly green technology.

Advocates for reform argue this is urgently needed in India's financial system, which is dominated by state-owned banks, among other things by loosening government restrictions on foreign banks and other financial institutions. High-profile economists like R. Rajan have been vocally critical of the country's crony capitalism. He has argued that India needs to build stronger, impartial agencies to make the allotment of licenses and natural resources more transparent.

Credit agencies like Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings raised alarm bells over the country's huge deficit. By the end of January 2012, the fiscal deficit Rs. 4.35 lakh crores (equivalent to USD 65 billion) had already crossed the total budgeted fiscal deficit for FY 2011–12 Rs. 4.13 lakh crores (equivalent to USD 61.8 billion). To tackle this problem the government has proposed reducing subsidies for food and fuel but this would be deeply unpopular and something which the current government is unable to risk, given its weak political standing and with general elections on the horizon. Other pending and contentious reforms include a land-reform bill, which could make it easier for industry to set up factories and more relaxed labour laws. By 2015, the government contained the fiscal deficit to 3.99 percent of GDP in FY15 to Rs. 5.01 lakh crore (equivalent to USD 75 billion) that shows a certain amount of fiscal discipline.

Under high pressure, Indian policy-makers have been inching towards reforms. However, despite steps taken to ease the permission for foreign 'single-brand' retailers to operate in India, it took more than a year for Sweden's IKEA to be given the green signal. While the slow pace of reform may be frustrating for businessmen and investors it does reflect the procedure of democratic policy-making which the Indian system must go through in order to achieve a consensus on a subject that is sensitive and politically highly divisive. When the comparisons are drawn with China, it needs to be kept in mind that while FDI in China has been directed at building factories aimed at the export industry, in India FDI is aimed at the domestic market. As a result, such FDI has both the potential to have a highly positive impact for domestic consumers (through lower prices and better distribution services) but also more invasive and damaging for local industries. The recent demand emerging from within the government for increasing the proportion of FDI in defence industries, with an eye to the export markets shows an attempt to learn from the successful record of China at using FDI as a motor for growth. (Diagram 7.10)

Nevertheless, there are built-in obstacles within the political and administrative system that hinder policy-making, and more critically, policy-implementation. For instance, it is argued that India's economic woes represent a struggle between the *netas* and *babus*. *Netas* or local politicians have played their part in contributing to policy paralysis with parliament sitting for less and less time in each session. At the same time, what was once described as the British 'steel framework', the administrative class, has transformed into a system of *bubudom* that works at cross-purposes to policy-makers and reformers. Like politicians, bureaucrats are also worried by corruption scandals—the exposure of which in recent time has both highlighted the gravity of the problem but in the process also added a further roadblock to policy-making and implementation.

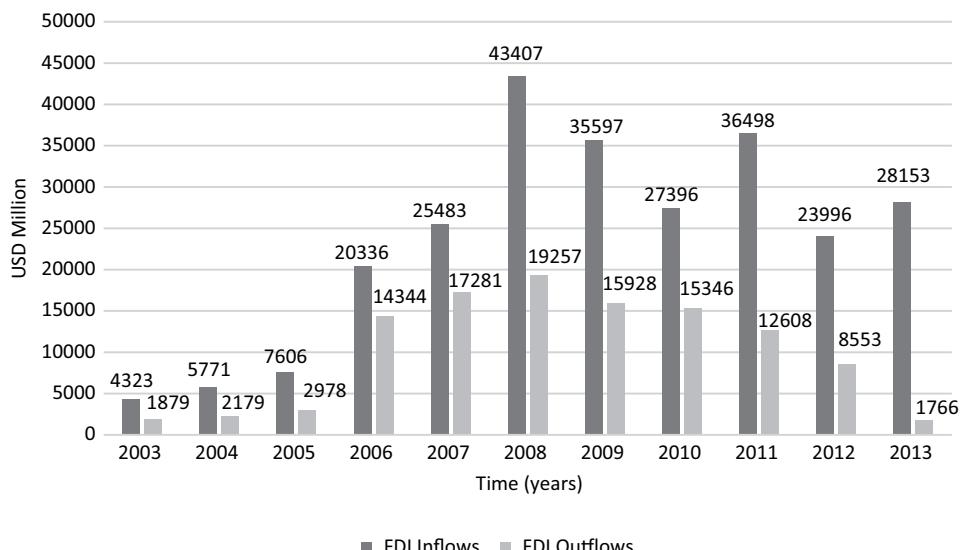


Diagram 7.10 India's outward vs. inward FDI (2003–2013).

Source: Author's Own, Data Source: OECD stats.

Apart from the sporadic deadlock between bureaucracy and politicians, and the government and parties of the opposition on the floor of the parliament, a further challenge is that of running a coalition government. In September 2012 Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister of West Bengal and the ruling Congress party's main coalition ally, made a public declaration that her party would quit the national government unless the limited reforms that had been announced, were reversed.

A critical challenge that has come to the fore as a result both of globalisation and liberalisation is the realisation that India's competitive edge in services may only remain for a short period in the future. Newer engines and sources of growth need to be discovered. For example, an effective manufacturing policy integrated into the rural framework could potentially contribute to closing the rural-urban divide and provide a much-needed stimulus to the economy.

Ease of doing business in India

Things have vastly improved as regards the ease of doing business. 'It took four months in 2005 to start a business in India, but it takes only 29 days now'— (The World Bank report, 2016.) Although it is still higher than the global average, India has come a long way, substantially shifting away from its dreaded slow and cumbersome image of the business environment.

India jumped up 12 positions (2014–15) and 4 positions (2015–16) to #130 (see Table 7.4) in the latest World Bank Ease of Doing Business rankings of 189 countries. The Government of India has instigated several paths breaking initiatives, with an unprecedented transparency in the system, put an emphasis on simplifying and rationalising of existing rules and introduced information technology to achieve good governance

Table 7.4 World Bank rankings of countries on ease of doing business sorted by aggregate distance to frontier scores on 10 factors

Economy	Ease of Doing Business	Starting a Business	Dealing with Construction Permits	Getting Electricity	Registering Properly	Getting Credit	Protecting Minority Investors	Paying Taxes	Trading Across Borders	Enforcing Contracts	Resolving Insolvency
Singapore	1	10	1	6	17	19	1	5	41	1	27
United Kingdom	6	17	23	15	45	19	4	15	38	33	13
United States*	7	49	33	44	34	2	35	53	34	21	5
Australia	13	11	4	39	47	5	66	42	89	4	14
Germany	15	107	13	3	62	28	49	72	35	12	3
Japan*	34	81	68	14	48	79	36	121	52	51	2
Russian Federation*	51	41	119	29	8	42	66	47	170	5	51
Greece	60	54	60	47	144	79	47	66	27	132	54
Bhutan	71	91	79	50	51	79	115	28	21	50	189
South Africa	73	120	90	168	101	59	14	20	130	119	41
China	84	136	176	92	43	79	134	132	96	7	55
Nepal	99	105	78	131	72	133	57	124	60	152	86
Sri Lanka	107	98	77	81	153	97	49	158	90	161	78
Brazil*	116	174	169	22	130	97	29	178	145	45	62
Maldives	128	48	41	141	171	126	134	128	137	95	135
India*	130	155	183	70	138	42	8	157	133	178	136
Pakistan*	138	122	61	157	137	133	25	171	169	151	94
Bangladesh*	174	117	118	189	185	133	88	86	172	188	155
Afghanistan	177	34	185	156	184	97	189	89	174	172	160

Source: World Bank Group; www.doingbusiness.org/reforms/overview/economy/india.

*The rankings of economies with populations over 100 million as of 2013 are based on data for 2 cities.

with an efficient and effective policy framework. Amidst the global slowdown, India rose to the top destination globally for FDI overtaking China (EY and FT) with a 40 percent increase in FDI inflow from 2014. According to World Bank's Chief Economist Kaushik Basu, India can break into the top 100 WB Ease of Doing Business rankings in the coming year. Initiatives like 'Make in India', 'Start Up India', 'Skill India', 'NIIF' (National Infrastructure Investment Fund), 'Jan Dhan Yojna', 'Aadhar UID', 'Mudra Yojna'- are measures that, following the language of the World Bank, 'Reform to Transform'. 2015–16 has been a 'year of highs' in terms of India reporting its highest foreign exchange reserves, software exports, turnaround time in ports, coal and electricity generation, production of motor vehicles, new railway kilometres, railway capital expenditure, urea production and new cooking gas connections to the rural poor among others. It has also been a 'year of firsts' with more than 210 million people getting access to financial services, free health insurance cover for the poor and 14 million toilets constructed in a year.

BOX 7.1 A DECADE OF SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS REFORMS—INDIA

Several measures have been taken to make India more attractive to investors, both from abroad as well as those from the country. The more important ones are:

- India made starting a business easier by eliminating the minimum capital requirement and the need to obtain a certificate to commence business operations. This reform applies to both Delhi and Mumbai.
- The utility in Delhi made the process for getting an electricity connection simpler and faster by eliminating the internal wiring inspection by the Electrical Inspectorate. The utility in Mumbai reduced the procedures and time required to connect to electricity by improving internal work processes and coordination.
- India strengthened minority investor protections by requiring greater disclosure of conflicts of interest by board members, increasing the remedies available in case of prejudicial related-party transactions and introducing additional safeguards for shareholders of privately held companies. This reform applies to both Delhi and Mumbai.
- India reduced the time required to obtain a building permit by establishing strict time limits for preconstruction approvals.
- India eased the administrative burden of paying taxes for firms by introducing mandatory electronic filing and payment for value-added tax.
- India made resolving insolvency easier by increasing the effectiveness of processes and thereby reducing the time required.
- India reduced the time for exporting by implementing an electronic data interchange system.
- India strengthened its secured transactions system by launching a unified and geographically centralized collateral registry and started to provide credit information on firms at the private credit bureau.

Mass poverty and India's 'new' political economy

The issue of mass poverty brings back, once again, the core problem of India's political economy, namely, growth vs. redistribution. Scholarly opinion remains divided. Many critics of the Indian model of development consider the continued existence of mass poverty as evidence of the shortcomings of Indian democracy and the political economy of development. Others point in the direction of the relative improvements in India's infrastructure, GDP and rate of growth as a sign of progress. In theoretical and methodological terms, mass poverty raises issues of incredible complexity, pitting quantitative methods against the qualitative, and problems of politics and public policy against the moral issue of poverty amid plenty. The issue raises a host of questions—specific to the Indian case—as well as problems of cross-cultural significance. First and foremost, among these is how successful India has been in reducing poverty. This question, in turn, raises the broader question of how to measure poverty. Is it objective and universal, or is poverty a state of mind, dependent on local conditions, culture and context?

The analysis of poverty in India uses both objective and subjective measures. The most important of the objective measures is the headcount ratio ($HCR = q/n \times 100$, where q is the number of persons below a pre-defined poverty norm, called the Poverty Line, and n is the total population). Yet another example is the Gini-coefficient which compares the actual distribution of income in the population to an ideal, egalitarian standard. These 'objective' measures include income, possessions (e.g. land, enduring goods), food consumption and human resources such as education, health and access to infrastructure.⁵¹ The 'subjective' or qualitative measures attach more importance to perception and the social construction of the self. How the 'poor' themselves think about their financial situation becomes the leading criterion of measurement in this case.⁵²

Visible symbols of unequal distribution of wealth—the run-down infrastructure of cities, shanty towns, beggars and reports of farmers' suicides in the media on the one hand and the lifestyles of India's nouveaux riches—inevitably lead to a China/India comparison where the former comes off as significantly more successful in combatting mass poverty. The contrast, significant as it is, needs to be put in context. While the Chinese record of lifting about 400 million people out of poverty in the span of one generation is not contested, one needs nevertheless to remember that the Chinese path to poverty reduction has been marked by large-scale killings—in the great Maoist campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and famines. India's performance, though not as dramatic as China's, is nevertheless respectable. In terms of percentage, though there is some controversy between Indian and external measurements, the fact remains that the poverty ratio has radically come down from nearly half the population to little over a quarter in the span of about two decades. In terms of numbers, since liberalization began, India has been able to reduce the number of people under the poverty line by about 100 million (Diagrams 7.11 and 7.12). In contrast to China, where the combination of authoritarian policies and the expansion of manufacturing have achieved the breakthrough, in India the progress has been achieved through the policies of redistribution and market forces.

The subjective measurement of poverty reinforces the picture that emerges from the objective measurement. Whereas about one-fifth of the Indian population feel worse off financially compared to before, the rest either manage to hold their own in a rapidly changing economy or even feel that they have improved their position. A roughly

similar situation emerges when people are asked a question about their current financial situation or, for that matter, their prognosis about the state of their finance in a foreseeable future. About one-third of the population turn out to be dissatisfied as compared to the rest who are either satisfied with the status quo or expect things to get better (see Tables 7.5–7.8).

Further analysis of the survey data makes it possible to establish a socio-demographic profile of the sections of the Indian population who consider themselves winners or losers in the new political economy (Table 7.7). Comparing the findings from 1996 to 2004, one can see that men are more likely to feel satisfied with their financial situation than women. The same is the case with the urban population as compared to the rural. Younger people are more likely to be optimists than pessimists. Educated people see their financial situation in a more optimistic way than the less educated, though it is quite significant that even among the illiterate—usually a reliable indicator of poverty—in the 2004 survey, about 40 percent expected their financial situation to get better. Two minority communities—Christians and Sikhs—tend to see themselves as better off than the average whereas the opposite is the case with Muslims; however, in percentage terms, they are not too far behind their Hindu brethren. The upper castes perform better generally though here also there are twists in the data. In 2004, only 13 percent of the scheduled castes saw themselves as satisfied with their financial situation compared to 20 percent among the upper castes, but when it came to the perception of future financial situation—though the relative gap of about 7 percent persists—in absolute terms, close to most of them saw themselves in the camp of the optimists! Finally, the perception of the financial situation, using a composite measurement of the economic class of the respondents that considers the ownership of several assets, shows the ‘very poor’ as far less satisfied with their present financial situation both in the 1996 and the 2004 surveys. However, the relative gap between the classes narrows when it comes to the perception of the future: in both surveys, close to 40 percent of the very poor report an optimistic view of their financial future.

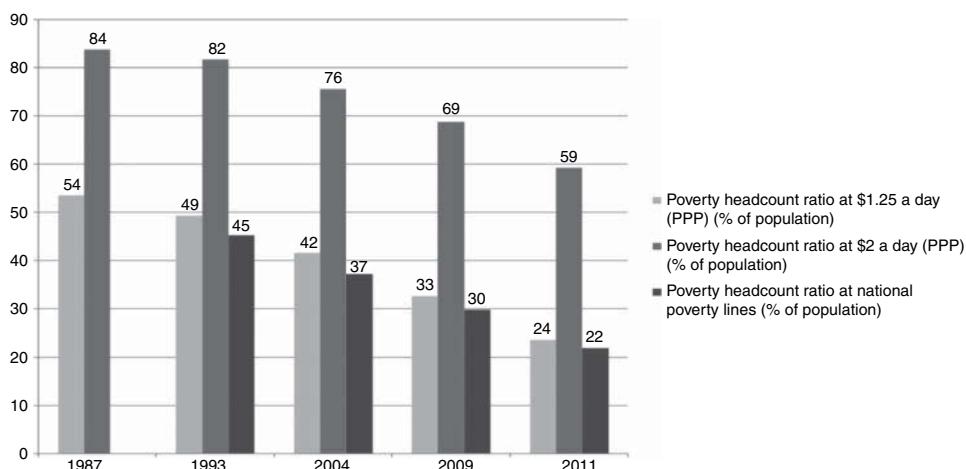


Diagram 7.11 Official poverty estimates—India poverty headcount ratio at \$1.25, at \$2 and at the national poverty line.

Source: Author's Own.

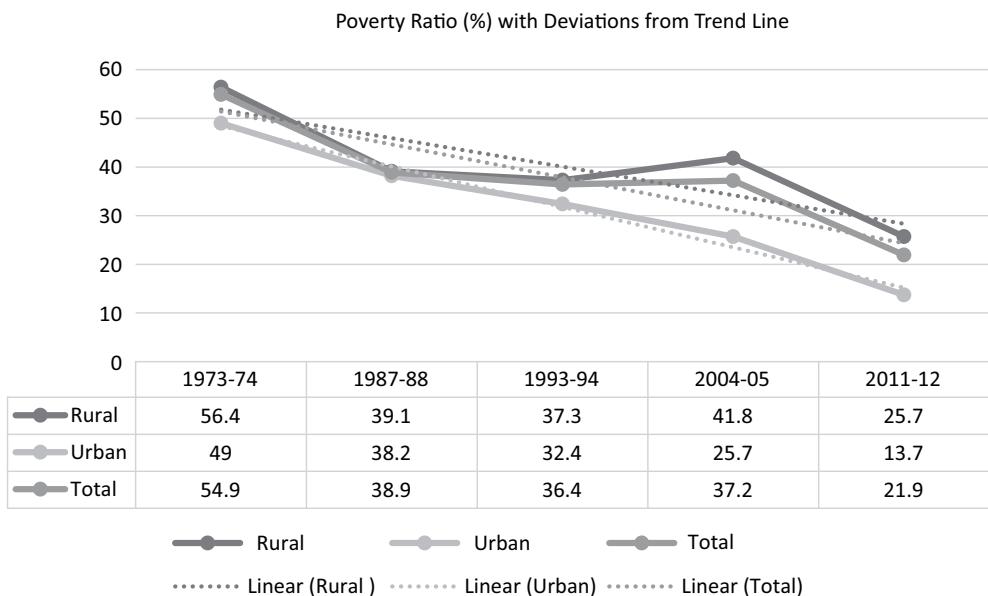


Diagram 7.12 Official poverty estimates (quinquennial surveys): poverty ratio (in percent).

Source: Author's Own.

Data Source: Tata Services Limited, Department of Economics and Statistics, Statistical Outline of India 2007–08 (Mumbai: 2008), p. 235.

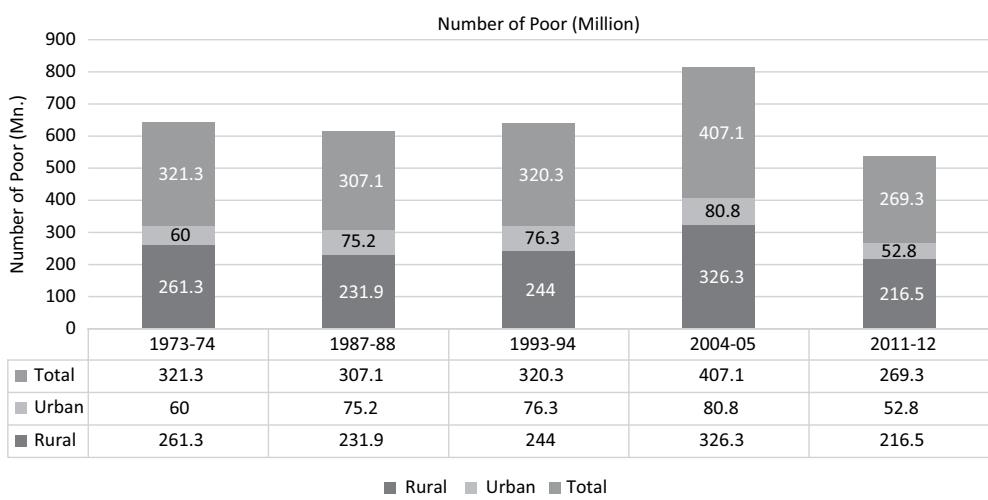


Diagram 7.13 Official poverty estimates (quinquennial surveys): number of poor (in millions).

Note: Up to 1993–94, revised data are based on Planning Commission. 2004–05 and 2011–12 are based on Tendulkar Methodology.

Source: Author's Own.

Data Source: Tata Services Limited, Department of Economics and Statistics, Statistical Outline of India 2007–08 (Mumbai: 2008), p. 235.

Table 7.5 Financial situation of respondents during the last few years (in percent)

<i>Situation has ...</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Improved	20.2	29.2	26.5	45.3
Same	40.1	53.8	51.1	33.5
Worsened	39.7	17	19	11.6
No opinion			3.4	9.6

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1971, 1996, 2004, 2009.

Table 7.6 Present financial situation of respondents (in percent)

<i>Respondent is ...</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Satisfied	10.7	28.4	16	15.1
Somewhat satisfied/dissatisfied	28.6	41.2	47.4	63
Not satisfied	60.7	30.4	33.4	13.1
No opinion / Can't say			3.2	8.8

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1971, 1996, 2004, 2009.

Table 7.7 Future financial situation of respondents (in percent)

<i>Situation will ...</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Get better	38.6	47.9	49.2	55
Remain the same	20.9	27	19.4	16.7
Get worse	18.8	8.9	6.2	7.3
Don't know/No opinion	21.7	16.2	25.2	20.9

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1971, 1996, 2004, 2009.

Modest by the standards of the tiger economies of East Asia or China, India's achievements nevertheless question the pessimistic predictions of Moore that saw no possibility of a breakthrough for India within the political and technological constraints that prevailed at the time.⁵³ Similar sentiments led Dandekar and Rath (1971), at the peak of the period of the populist rhetoric of Indira Gandhi, to suggest that poverty alleviation needed higher taxation and employment generation through public works. True, the new agrarian technology that made the Green Revolution possible have certainly increased the room to manoeuvre of poor democracies struggling against mass poverty. Still, India has yet to lift a lot of people out of poverty, particularly in the countryside. The problem with these people is that they are mostly without saleable skills, and are dependent on subsidies of various kinds for their basic survival. Consequently, radical politics and populist policies of vote-hungry politicians have found a niche in these sections of the Indian population.

As a matter of fact, the struggle between the market and the state—driven by the concern for social justice and populist politics—has been characteristic of Indian development right from the outset. India's Five Year Plans directed public funds towards private enterprise and infrastructure building, not employment generation. Nehru's model—import substitution, industrialization, modernization of agriculture, and planning—was a model based on the 'felt needs'⁵⁴ and the trickle-down theory of development. *Zamindari* abolition was followed by less enthusiastic but not very effective land reforms. Cooperative village management became the preferred jargon. By the late

Table 7.8 Perception of financial satisfaction by socio-demographic groups (in percent)

Groups	1996		2004			
	Financial Situation has improved	Satisfied with present financial situation	Financial situation will get better	Financial Situation has improved	Satisfied with present financial situation	Financial situation will get better
All Groups	29.2	28.4	47.9	26.5	16.0	49.2
Gender						
Men	31.6	31.0	50.5	28.7	17.0	51.8
Women	26.7	25.7	45.3	24.3	15.1	47.0
Locality						
Rural	26.6	25.8	45.1	25.8	15.7	48.2
Urban	37.3	36.6	56.9	29.8	17.7	54.7
Age						
<= 25 years	32.9	29.9	52.5	30.2	17.0	55.3
26–35 years	31.2	28.0	50.1	28.9	16.6	51.8
36–45 years	27.4	27.5	45.7	24.8	15.4	49.2
46–55 years	25.9	29.1	46.9	24.1	14.9	45.9
56 years +	24.3	27.4	40.1	22.5	16.1	41.2
Education						
Very poor	18.1	17.7	37.5	17.5	10.6	41.9
Poor	27.5	25.8	46.7	24.6	14.0	49.0
Middle	34.6	43.0	54.3	34.9	21.0	56.3
Upper class	51.2	50.2	68.7	42.9	29.2	61.1
Religion						
Hindu	29.1	28.6	47.9	27.4	16.7	50.2
Muslim	26.6	25.9	45.2	21.1	12.6	45.8
Christian	34.6	31.2	59.1	24.0	9.6	51.0
Sikh	48.4	34.1	52.4	32.9	24.8	49.9
Caste						
Scheduled caste	24.5	28.6	47.9	22.3	12.8	45.6
Scheduled tribe	25.3	25.9	45.2	24.9	11.2	49.9
OBC	25.7	31.2	59.1	25.8	15.3	49.1
Upper caste	36.4	34.1	52.4	30.7	20.2	52.2
Class						
Very poor	18.1	17.7	37.5	17.5	10.6	41.9
Poor	27.5	25.8	46.7	24.6	14.0	49.0
Middle	34.6	43.0	54.3	34.9	21.0	56.3
Upper class	51.2	50.2	68.7	42.9	29.2	61.1

Data Source: National Election Survey, CSDS (Delhi) 1996, 2004.

1960s, the land situation was getting polarized. Bullock capitalists on the one side and radicalized peasantry on the other were producing an environment many thought to be ripe for a Maoist revolution.

The split in the CPM, rise of Naxalite violence and political instability in many Indian States indicated the deeper problems of the Indian model of development. But the much-heralded revolution did not materialize. What followed instead was a spate of radical legislation, nationalization and some conspicuous programmes under the 20-point programme, e.g. land to the landless, homestead land, and target group programmes. These measures were introduced by Indira Gandhi during the eighteen-month Emergency. Many of these social-democratic policies were put on hold when the

Janata Party came to power after the end of the Emergency and the fall of Mrs Gandhi. Rich peasant parties dominated. Then came the stagnation of the late 1970s, and finally, the ‘half-hearted’ liberalization of the 1980s. Current poverty policy straddles between target approach, subsidies, special election-oriented policies by State governments and the programmes launched by NGOs and activist groups.

The poor in India have neither disappeared nor formed themselves into a political party or movement, but continue to exist as a demand group whose presence is a brake on rapid and radical liberalization. These demand groups have expressed themselves through sporadic violence which has spurred the state—acting through the union, State and local governments, central agencies and NGOs—to generate anti-poverty policies and programmes. Following Independence, a centre-dominated developmental model and a Centralized federal system operated in a complementary fashion. The constitution provided for several methods to transfer resources from the centre to the States, such as assigning in full the net proceeds of certain taxes and duties like stamp duties, duties on toilet and medicinal preparations, estate duty on non-agricultural property, duties of succession to property other than non-agricultural land, and taxes on railway fares and freight; compulsory sharing of certain taxes like income tax and permissive sharing of taxes like excise. The Finance Commission (appointed by the President for a duration of five years) and the Planning Commission (whose recommendations are discussed by the National Development Council) are responsible for the sharing of revenues.⁵⁵ There are two conflicting principles that govern these transfers: should the hardworking and productive be rewarded, or should the poor and backward be helped? Once again, we are faced with the dual challenge for political economy in the context of a poor, post-colonial, democratic state which must balance the conflicting principles of accumulation and legitimacy. The discretionary grants-in-aid are made by the central cabinet; there are no fixed criteria for these.

The policies of liberalization which were launched in 1991, to start dismantling the draconian rules of the command economy required a new regime—informal arrangements among sets of actors—to provide coordination in a rapidly changing financial environment. By scaling down the involvement of the state in the developmental process and thereby reducing the functions of the central government, the process of liberalization risked generating opposition from the poorer State governments which were dependent on central grants and subsidies. However, in practice it has not been so. Jenkins even argues that part of the momentum for further liberalization comes from India’s regions. The removal of subsidies and hand-outs has not produced an anti-reform coalition of left parties which must have been aware of the lack of popular support for reform. However, the effective management of the transition from the command economy to the market economy has helped India avoid the chaos that has blighted liberalization in post-communist states of Eastern Europe and Russia.⁵⁶ Still, how to develop the economy, incentivise productivity gains and still, secure distributive justice simultaneously remains a problem for policy makers in India.

That poverty will continue to be a salient issue in the deliberations over economic policy in the foreseeable future is more than likely. The percentage of people who supported the need for a ceiling on property and social control over ownership was a staggering 70 percent of the population in the 1996 survey, and this remains almost unchanged in 2004. Even more significantly, these sentiments seem to be almost equally spread out among different social strata, testifying to the basic communitarian character of the Indian political system.

It is in the background of this stock image of mass poverty and dismal record regarding indicators of human development that one can understand the pressing need for action. The solution has come in the form of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)—an innovative, strategic reform that is discussed below—that has achieved an iconic status among the legislative initiatives of the UPA government, and has been continued by the successor NDA government.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, was ratified in 2005 and started in 200 pilot districts throughout India in February 2006. In April 2008, it was implemented in all 593 districts of India. The basic aim of NREGA is to provide at least 100 days of work at the rate of the government-fixed minimum wage per day. The wages are to be paid, if possible, on a weekly basis. Eligible are all adult members of rural households who are willing to undertake unskilled work. If the local authorities are not able to provide such unskilled work within 15 days from the reception of the application, the applicant is eligible for a daily unemployment allowance until work can be provided. The schemes which are to provide the work are aiming at improving the livelihood of the rural population. Such initiatives include water management programmes, infrastructure improvements, especially all-weather roads and forest preservation. The main points of critique concern the village panchayats' inability to implement due to understaffed and underfunded institutions, lack of professionals, corruption and even active sabotage. Another serious threat to the success of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is the misuse and/or non-distribution of the essential job-cards. The job-cards are to be distributed to the households to ensure their right to wages. There are incidents where job-cards have not been issued to workers who conducted work under the NREGS. There have been also cases of panchayat officials who issued job-cards to each of their family members although the rule states that just one job-card shall be issued per (entire) household.

Despite the numerous specific failures on the ground and the structural problems, NREGS did have a positive impact. A field survey by the Allahabad University from mid-2008 showed a significant positive view of NREGA amongst workers in the so-called Hindi-Belt states. For example 69 percent⁵⁷ reported that the wages from the NREGA scheme enabled them to avoid hunger, while 57 percent⁵⁸ were able to avoid migration for distress reasons. Distress migration is a special problem for small land-owners who do self-sufficient agriculture. Those households are especially threatened by extreme weather, which influences the amount of harvest. Such households cannot provide food-security for themselves without assistance. The MGNREGA has become a major source of support for this category of rural people.

Conclusion

India's experience with the political economy of development helps us respond to the paradox that Moore (1966) points out. Towards the end of his magisterial study of paths to economic growth and modernization, Barrington Moore drew in the case of India to emphasise the dilemma of development in transitional societies that choose the

democratic path. ‘A strong element of coercion remains necessary if a change is to be made’ (Moore 1966: 410). Since democracies do not permit the kind of coercion and economic squeeze that the extraction of the surplus requires, the result could only be a ‘peaceful paralysis’. He said,

Barring some technical miracle that will enable every Indian peasant to grow abundant food in a glass of water or a bowl of sand, labour will have to be applied much more effectively, technical advances introduced, and means found to get food to the dwellers of cities.

(Moore 1966: 410)

As he saw it, the choice was between painful reforms or economic stagnation as the ‘price of peaceful change’. This prediction, as we have seen in this chapter, has not come through in the Indian case. How did India make the breakthrough and what can we generalise from the Indian case?

The political context and the technological environment in which the initial design of India’s political economy evolved have changed substantially over the course of the past decades. The dismantling of India’s command economy and the revolution in the technology of communication, particularly the internet, have helped India jump into the ranks of main players in this field. Harnessing these new technological inventions has been possible because of the innovative capacity of India’s entrepreneurs, following liberalisation of the economy and the steps taken by the government for a closer integration of India with the global market. The new technology of communication has helped India make a breakthrough into service industries. Regarding agriculture, India, like other developing countries, has had access to the fortuitous invention of the HYV—the high-yielding variety ‘miracle seed’—which made the breakthrough in food production possible in the 1960s. However, poverty persists and the dilemma between the need for rapid growth and the imperative of social justice still mark the process of development in India. Yet another phenomenon that Moore could not have known is the powerful presence of the Indian diaspora in crucial economic arenas of the world and the vast volume of cash transfer they undertake by the way of remittances. Similarly, the burgeoning scale of FDI and the rise of joint-ventures as the new motor of growth are post-Moore phenomenon.

The annual budget for the financial year that the NDA government presented in February 2016 to India’s parliament provides some insights into how the state seeks to reconcile the exigencies of growth and need for short-term welfare, linked to the chances of re-election.⁵⁹ The UPA government had already set the trend of relating the budget to political exigencies. For example, under the UPA regime, the thresholds for income tax were raised from Rs. 110,000 (US\$2,800) to Rs. 150,000 for men and Rs. 180,000 for women. The peak customs duty was left unchanged but the central value-added tax rate was reduced from 16 percent to 14 percent. The measures to accelerate growth and respond to the financial crisis were supplemented with attempts to promote long-term investment and short-term welfare. The allocation for Bharat Nirman, a rural infrastructure development plan, was to be raised to Rs. 313 billion, and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was to be implemented in all districts of the country with a budget provision of Rs. 160 billion. The government committed itself to increasing funds for education and undertaking institutional measures to boost exchange-traded currency and bond markets. Most significant of all, in response to the

crisis affecting India's farming sector which reportedly led to 17,000 farmers' suicides in 2007, the government allocated the sum of US\$15 billion as a one-off loan waiver for farmers. The 2016 budget of the NDA continued the trend of supporting rural interests in terms of continuing financial support for MNREGA and instituting a comprehensive crop insurance scheme while providing some incentives to the middle-class and corporate interests as well. Financial inclusion plans like the opening of bank accounts for sections of the populations who were outside formal financial sector (the Jan Dhan Yojna) were an innovative policy.⁶⁰

The minor fluctuations around a generally cautious policy aimed at sustaining growth and welfare can count on a solid base of financial expertise, economic reserves and managerial talent that characterizes the political economy of India in the twenty-first-century. In the euphoria over liberalisation, one tends to forget that the gains of the first decade of planning, 1951–61, were not inconsiderable. There was a sizeable increase in public investment in major and medium irrigation projects, power, transport, basic industries and higher education. During this significant decade, agricultural production rose by 41 percent and industrial production by 94 percent; steel production increased from 1.4 to 3.5 million tons. Domestic savings as a proportion of the GDP (at 1960–61 prices) rose from 10 percent in 1954–55 to 15 percent in 1964–65. Life expectancy went up from 40 years in 1951 to 50 years in 1966. By Rosen's conservative estimate, India's total stock of wealth grew by 65–75 percent in the ten-year period after Independence.⁶¹ This growth story also had its fatal flaws. On the negative side, hard-core poverty and illiteracy were barely touched; growth was sluggish; agriculture stagnated; and a patronage-driven, corrupt party machine (the Quota Permit Raj) spread its tentacles across the length and breadth of the country. The crisis hit in the 1960s, bringing in its wake a populist counter-attack and the authoritarian rule of 1975–77.⁶² India got cut off from the dynamism of the international market and wrong priorities caused the under-investment in infrastructure and education which hindered its transition from a subsistence-based economy to one based on skills.

The events and economic statistics of the past two decades provide a contrasting picture to that which preceded it. Whereas some sectors of the Indian economy have taken rapid strides in productivity and competitiveness, social and material vestiges of a backward economy persist in others. The situation is still replete with puzzles and anomalies for those unfamiliar with India.⁶³

The combined processes of electoral mobilization, positive discrimination, judicialisation and political movements have succeeded in providing the necessary economic space to those who have fallen out of the safety net of the welfare state in the face of the sustained assault of the policies of liberalisation. The state and the corporate sector have found the rhythm to work in tandem. Some States of the Indian Union have done better than others. But this has created a demonstration effect, whereby State-level politicians have learnt the importance of growth and public service delivery as the key to electoral success. Besides, skilled workers have tended to migrate from less performing regions to the job markets opening in other parts of India and abroad, adding remittances, yet another means of pumping money and ambition to backward regions. Finally, the pre-liberalisation practice of central transfer of resources from the rich States to the poorer ones has not disappeared altogether, thus adding one more strand to the safety net for those falling behind in the race for development.

The politics of India's political economy has thus generated enough countervailing forces to sustain citizenship and democratic consolidation. Quite significantly, today

there is a re-assessment of the role of the state. Even the radical advocates of liberalization assert the importance of the state as the careful observer, and the site of political negotiation among competing groups, and most important of all, as the arbiter of the authoritative allocation of values, and as such, is the state continues to be a key player in development in its capacity as regulator. The discussion of the state as an international actor, particularly regarding economic diplomacy, builds on these salient features of India's political economy, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 The chapter also responds to the critics of the Indian model from Barrington Moore (1966), who could only predict a future of economic stagnation and 'democratic paralysis', as well as the neoliberal critique of socialist planning which may have slowed down growth in the early years after Independence but nevertheless provided the economic basis of democratic consolidation.
- 2 Students of comparative politics from Aristotle to Seymour M. Lipset have argued that a degree of political moderation and equitable distribution of property are necessary conditions for the viability of representative democracy. The success of Indian democracy, in this sense constitutes a counter-factual.
- 3 Moore (1966) was most closely identified with this line of reasoning. This pessimistic prognosis was sustained by Myrdal's concept of the 'soft state' (Myrdal 1968), incapable of taking urgent measures to reform the economy. A new generation of commentators (e.g., see Das (2002) in the epigraph to this chapter) has taken Nehru to task for his failure to take hard decisions about crucial economic and political reforms on land, foreign trade and entrepreneurship at a time when South-east Asian states like South Korea were making their own breakthrough.
- 4 During the first half of the twentieth-century, from 1900 to 1946, Indian national income under colonial rule had risen by 0.7 percent annually, while its population grew at the rate of 0.8 percent. This accounts for economic stagnation under colonial rule which saw India's share of the world economy shrink from 32.9 percent in the year 1 AD to 4.2 percent in 1950 (Table 1.1).
- 5 Purchasing Power Parity is a composite measure that considers the local cost of essential services and consumer products. Economists argue that the PPP, rather than the mere monetary equivalent of local incomes in international currencies, is a better indicator of income relative to standards of living.
- 6 India's economy has withstood the impact of the global economic crises. For an analysis of how India managed to steady the rate of macroeconomic growth while holding inflation down despite global financial crises, see Duvvuri Subbarao's *Who Moved My Interest Rate? Leading the Reserve Bank of India Through Five Turbulent Years* (Penguin/Viking, 2016).
- 7 See India's Human Development Index Trends (1990–2014) Source: UNDP <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/IND>.
- 8 The issue of crop insurance has now been addressed to in the crop insurance project of the Modi government. See Vinod Rai, 'The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana: India's New Safety Net for Farmers', ISAS Brief No. 432, NUS 2016. on skill development and so on, NUS, June 2016.
- 9 India Country Overview April 2010, World Bank. See: www.worldbank.org.in. More than 400 million of India's people—or one-third of the world's poor—still live in poverty. And, many of those who have recently escaped poverty (53 million people during 2005–10) are still highly vulnerable to falling back into it. In fact, due to population growth, the absolute number of poor people in some of India's poorest states increased during the last decade. Source: www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/overview.
- 10 See Johnson (1983) for the concept of the 'developmental' state where the agenda of economic growth was above and beyond the pale of partisan politics.
- 11 The Indian model of development most identified with Nehru has had sharp critics like Moore (1966) who has described it as 'an out-and-out failure' (p. 395), 'rather long on talk

- and quite short of development' (p. 407). For a positive evaluation of Nehru's model of development see Dasgupta (1989).
- 12 See Wall (1978), pp. 88–9.
 - 13 A pejorative epithet, usually implying the tendency of the Congress regime to practise patronage politics. Literally, a regime based on disbursing largesse such as quotas for commodities whose supply is controlled by the government, and giving permits to set up industries or run specific businesses for which government permission is needed. Liberalization has attempted to put an end to this by removing these areas of enterprise from the control of the government.
 - 14 Stanley Kochanek, *India's Economic transition* (OUP, 2007): Literature on rent seeking industrialization, which became important and was inspired to some extent by the Indian experience, see Chapter 1 'Globalization and Deregulation: Ideas, Interests, and Institutional Change in India', by Rahul Mukherji.
 - 15 Joshi and Little (1996).
 - 16 *The Economist*, 21–26 January 1995, p. 7 and www.tradingeconomics.com/india/corporate-tax-rate; www.tradingeconomics.com/india/personal-income-tax-rate: Accessed 8 July 2016.
 - 17 The *Arthashastra* ('Science of Material Gain') is thought to have been written by Chanakya (also known as Kautilya) in the fourth-century BC. See Subrata Mitra and Michael Liebig, *Kautilya's Arthashastra: An Intellectual Portrait—Classical Roots of Modern Politics in India* (Baden Baden: NOMOS; 2016).
 - 18 Though this kind of principled opposition to the market has become less vehement over the recent past, the tendency of political parties to get polarized on this issue is still very much in evidence. One can discern this from the well-publicized pro-poor pronouncements of Mr Rahul Gandhi, the scion and presumed successor to Mrs Sonia Gandhi, the President of the Congress party.
 - 19 See Baldev Raj Nayar's *India's Economic Transition: The Politics of Reforms* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press; 2007), pp. 202–27. Reproduced from Asian Survey, Vol. 40, No. 5 (September–October 2000), pp. 792–815.
 - 20 See Amitendu Palit, 'GST in India: Success comes with new challenges', ISAS Insights, No. 441, 5 August, 2016.
 - 21 When asked in a national opinion survey in 2004 about the financial prospects they expected, 49.2 percent of the national sample thought their financial conditions would improve, 6.2 percent thought they would worsen, 19.4 percent thought they would remain the same and about 25 percent was not sure. In the same survey, 67.5 percent thought their vote influenced how things are run in the country, compared to 17.5 percent who thought the opposite. National Election Survey, CSDS, Delhi 2004.
 - 22 Wilbert Moore (1968), p. 366.
 - 23 In their characterization of the state in India, Rudolph and Rudolph (1987) show how it has successfully incorporated some apparently contradictory values to create a space where different social groups can periodically negotiate the priorities for the politics of the day.
 - 24 Here, the British legacy is mixed. The original British-made famine acts provided for minimum welfare to the indigent, though it is state inaction that led to the avoidable deaths of three million people in the Bengal famine of 1943.
 - 25 See Medha M. Kudsiya's *The Life and Times of G. D. Birla* (Oxford University Press, 2003).
 - 26 The Industrial Development & Regulation Act (1951) gave birth to industrial licensing. See Medha M. Kudsiya's *The Life and Times of G. D. Birla* (Oxford University Press, 2003).
 - 27 See I G Patel, *Glimpses of Indian Economic Policy: An Insider's View* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 38–48 and Medha M Kudsiya, *The Life and Times of G D Birla* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 304–21.
 - 28 David Porter has talked about this attempt to satisfy each of the dominant ideologies:

That orientation was a weakness. It was widely recognised that successful implementation of development programmes initiated by government required a bureaucracy which was (a) innovative, (b) could bring to bear on local problems a wide range of specialist expertise, and (c) could respond quickly to local demands for such expertise. It was also widely recognised that these characteristics were not 'natural' within the Indian bureaucracy.

Many IAS [Indian Administrative Service] individuals were staunch proponents of development and gave it a high priority. It was even argued that an IAS generalist in district or secretariat, when viewed as an individual, could be considered an effective development man or woman. But to make these points about IAS individuals was to miss the broader consequences of the general administrative tradition which these individuals sustained. What even the most enlightened IAS officers failed to see was that their own tradition resulted in a more general orientation throughout the bureaucracy that de-emphasised these characteristics which were important for sustained, successful development administration.

Potter (1986), p. 243

- 29 Refer to the opinion of the poor about their welfare from Mitra and Singh (2009).
- 30 Is the 'Green Revolution' yet another example of the Indian penchant for catchy slogans, heady rhetoric or, as Barrington Moore put it, an Indian habit of being tall in talk and short in action? As Frankel (1971) says: The phrase 'green revolution' has all the qualities of a good slogan. It is catchy; it simplifies a complex reality; and most important, it carries the conviction that fundamental problems are being solved. Agriculture, it suggests, is being peacefully transformed through the quiet workings of science and technology, reaping the economic gains of modernization while avoiding the social costs of mass upheaval and disorder usually associated with rapid change (p. V).
- 31 'The basic assumption of the Community Development Programme ... has been that the Indian peasant would of his own free will, and because of his "felt needs" immediately adopt technical improvements, the moment he was shown them' (Moore 1966: 401). Moore explains why it did not happen that way. "Felt needs" in any society are in large measure the product of the individual's specific social situation and upbringing. They are created; not simply the gift of nature' (*ibid.*, p. 402).
- 32 Frankel (1971), p. 3.
- 33 The problem from the 2nd FYP onwards was organizational changes but little investment. This approach continued till mid-1960s. See also, Francine R. Frankel's *India's Political Economy: The Gradual Revolution (1947–2004)*, second edition (Oxford University Press; 2005).
- 34 Fundamentally, the notion of village democracy is a piece of romantic Gandhian nostalgia that has no relevance to modern conditions. The pre-modern Indian village was probably as much of a petty tyranny as a petty republic; certainly, the modern one is such. To democratize the villages without altering property relationships is simply absurd. Finally, the real sources of change, the factors that determine the fate of the peasantry, lie outside the boundaries of the village. Through the ballot box and through their pressure on state and national politics, the peasants can do something about those questions, but not within the framework of village politics. Moore (1966), p. 394.
- 35 Frankel (1978), pp. 197–98.
- 36 At least in the short run, the dominant landed castes were successful in manipulating most subsistence cultivators and landless workers fragmented by vertical factional structures to capture the village institutions. They increased their access to scarce development resources and strengthened their position as strategic intermediaries, linking local markets and power structures to the state and national economic and political systems. *ibid.*, p. 200.
- 37 Leaf (1980/81), p. 620.
- 38 Shiva (1991), p. 200.
- 39 Moore (1966).
- 40 The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition Act (1950), which covered the most populated State of India, was the first act on this subject. However, the way it was passed severely compromised its objectives. The bill was under preparation for a very long time. Since it was debated for years it gave enough opportunity to most of the *zamindars*, *talukdars* and other intermediaries to sell off or dispose of their landed property to near relatives, family-controlled trusts or through *benami* (false-name) transactions. Subsequently, the act was struck down by the High Court of Uttar Pradesh as ultra vires. Consequently, the constitution was amended, for the first time, in early 1951, and the act was incorporated in the Ninth Schedule of the constitution itself, and only thereafter became enforceable. By that time, the political context had changed significantly.

- 41 See Agriculture Census, India, 2010–11, for diagrams on area operated by operational holdings, number of operational holdings and average size of operational holdings as per different agricultural censuses. Link: <http://agcensus.nic.in/document/agcensus2010/CompleteReport.pdf>.
- 42 First Five Year Plan (1953), p. 178.
- 43 Once agricultural capitalism gains legitimacy, the next step would be to think of land as *convertible*, depending on the *market opportunity*, and to let the logic of the market spread into lucrative fruits, vegetables and other cash crops like cashew nuts. The Indian producer can then link up with the international market in a competitive way. India can ignore the ‘niche-marketing’ strategy at her own peril. However, as the successful resistance to the acquisition of agricultural land for the Special Economic Zone in West Bengal shows, the case for land rights of small peasants is far from lost.
- 44 See the chapter on ‘Managing the economy: half-hearted liberalization’ in Kohli (1990), pp. 305–38.
- 45 A crisis is an opportunity for introducing a new style of government pursuing a new model of development when the old style and the old model can convincingly be presented as having led to a disaster. But in a democracy, there must also be a sufficient body of influential opinion already convinced or very ready to be convinced of the need for radical change. Jenkins explains the strategies as ‘liberalization by stealth’, through which Indian elites achieved a policy change. See ‘Political skills: introducing reform by stealth’, in Jenkins (1999), pp. 172–207.
- 46 Joshi and Little (1996), pp. 1–2.
- 47 This, as we can learn from the Nobel prize-winning economist Stiglitz, is also the position of many international experts on globalization.
- 48 See the chapter on ‘A million reformers’ in Das (2002), pp. 228–43.
- 49 Indian manufacturing and business have become quite adept at turning judicial decisions on free-trade to their advantage, showing their enterprising skills. A judgment of the Supreme Court of India delivered on April 1, 2013, rejecting the pleas of the Swiss company Novartis for a patent, opened the possibility for Indian companies to produce generic anti-cancer drugs. Hailed as a ‘landmark verdict’ (The Hindu, April 2, 2013, p. 1), the judgment, while protecting intellectual property rights in principle, reaches beyond the narrow definition of patents to what it considers the greater interest of the consumers (the Indian generic drugs are cheaper), and by implication, gives a boost to the export market of Indian pharmaceutical companies making cheaper generic drugs. A second aspect of this judgment is its attempt to strike a balance between genuine innovation and artful manipulation of patent applications to ‘evergreen’ and existing product. See Dwijen Rangekar, ‘Calling big pharma’s bluff’, The Hindu, April 3, 2013, p. 10.
- 50 International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook (April 2016).
- 51 See the Lorenz curve and Gini coefficients, based on land holdings, and NSS-based consumption data in Kohli (1987), pp. 82–3.
- 52 For subjective measurements of poverty please refer to Table 7.3 ‘Perception of financial satisfaction by socio-demographic groups’ in Mitra and Singh (2009), pp. 155–56.
- 53 Moore (1966), p. 410.
- 54 Ibid, p. 392.
- 55 Commenting on the Finance Commission, Austin (1966: 220), says that it is a guardian ‘of the equitable and fiscally sound distribution of the revenue from the shared tax heads and of the effective use of grant-in-aid ... the Finance Commission—quasi-judicial bodies of five members appointed by the President’.
- 56 Jenkins (1999), citing the case of windfall profits arising out of the ending of the monopoly of the Karnataka coffee board over the entire coffee crop (pp. 132–33), shows how in the new environment where the state government and provincial elites can make money, rather than ganging up on the central government, State governments have started competing against one another to enhance their incomes. Their ability to adapt themselves to the new political economy has further delinked States from one another—contributing to the pattern of ‘provincial Darwinism’ that has reduced the effectiveness of resistance among State-level political elites. The potential for centre–State conflicts has thus been transformed into inter-State competition for investment by Indian and multinational capital.

- 57 The statistics are taken from the Economist Intelligence Unit country report on India, April 2008, p. 11.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/budget-2016/union-budget-2016> Accessed 2 August 2016.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Rosen (1966), p. 135; Table 10.
- 62 Frankel (1978: 188–9) gives a further catalogue of the shortcomings in implementation.
- 63 Thus, one often hears why caste survives, even thrives on the interaction of the modern state and the economy and traditional society. A closer inspection of the ground reality reveals that while caste as status continues, caste as occupation or as a determinant of life expectation has pretty much disappeared. The combined effects of legislation and political action have succeeded in detaching caste status from caste consciousness. Consequently, the closed world of the *jati* is slowly opening to political and economic opportunities, bolstered by the myriad methods of advancement—through open competition in the market place or through the politics of positive discrimination.

8 Engaging the world

Foreign policy and nation-building in India

One is ... tempted to ask whether India is destined always to be ‘emerging’ but never actually emerging.

Cohen (2001), p. 2

A stage has come where no country can now think of treating India with contempt or condescension. Every country today is looking at us either with deference or as an equal.

Narendra Modi (2014)¹

In this chapter, spanning the period from Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India to Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India since 2014, we delve into the origin and evolution of India’s foreign policy, focusing on why it had acquired its ambivalent profile over the long years since Independence, and what changes are in course under the government of Prime Minister Modi. The chapter analyses Mr Modi’s robust networking with the world’s leaders directly through Prime Ministerial visits. His efforts to engage the Indian Diaspora, and attempts to attract investments in the home market and gain influence in foreign societies is a significant departure from the conventional mould. The chapter considers the factors that have led to this shift in the foreign policy stance of India and the consequences this has for India’s relationship with the South Asian neighbours, and beyond them, to global politics.

A sense of ambiguity had long been associated with India’s foreign policy. As the two epigraphs to this chapter show, opinions differ about the general direction of India’s foreign policy, its momentum and impact. The sheer time and energy that the government of India devotes today to international relations has given a new sense of purpose to India’s foreign policy. The country is willing to share the burden of global leadership² and to become an environmentally friendly, global citizen, in a manner reminiscent of the early years of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.³ Most important, while some of the initiatives of the new government are new, others build on the past, which shows the strategic capacity of the government to generate and lead a cohesive, broad based foreign policy with links to the past. This has started giving a new drive to Indian foreign policy, compared to the diffuse character and uncertain goals that had marked Indian foreign policy in the past.⁴

The ‘Janus-face’ of India’s foreign policy

India’s foreign policy, until recently, used to come across as enigmatic. Not many understood the conflicting pressures that led to its convoluted character. India’s nuclear

policy is a prime example of the equivocation. The country of apostles of peace like Buddha and Gandhi, India became a member of the nuclear club in 1998. An impressive arsenal of conventional weapons complements India's bombs and missiles, many of them indigenous in origin (see Table 8.1). However, despite the possession of this deadly stockpile, India did not (and still does not) have an explicit doctrine stating whom these weapons are aimed against.⁵ The Indian nuclear tests of 1998 undertaken by a Hindu nationalist-led ruling coalition, (strongly condemned by China and quickly followed by Pakistan) were not, as the subsequent events have shown, merely a flash in the pan. The tests brought to public attention a policy of developing nuclear weapons that India has followed covertly over a long period. Political bickering over details notwithstanding, a bipartisan consensus has grown over the need for India to acquire nuclear weapons and delivery capacity.⁶ Still, despite the stable and bi-partisan character of India's nuclear doctrine, there is no coherent policy that underpins it.⁷ A similar incoherence marked India's use of 'coercive diplomacy', against Pakistan, involving the mobilization of large numbers of troops after the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in 2001. However, the mobilised troops were, after a while, recalled, without any demonstrable goals having been achieved. This lack of clarity over broader goals (Mitra 2009) has affected the global perception of India's foreign policy.⁸ The chapter looks at the past whose long shadow falls on the present to explain the evolutionary course of India's foreign policy which has only recently acquired a more coherent character.

The uncertainty of India's diplomatic and strategic objectives has not gone unnoticed by experts. Cohen (2001: 2) describes India's foreign policy as Janus-faced, straddling

Table 8.1 Tools of 'persuasion': who has what?

Tools of Power	China	India	Pakistan	USA
Nuclear Weapons	260	100–120	110–130	7,100
Tanks	9,150	6,464	2,924	8,848
Warships	714	295	197	415
Fighter Aircrafts	1,230	679	304	2,308
Submarines	68	14	5	75
Active Troops	2,335,000	1,325,000	620,000	1,400,000
Available Military	750,000,000	616,000,000	95,000,000	145,215,000
Manpower				
Military Spending (\$ Billion)	\$214.78	\$51.23	\$9.50	\$596.30
GDP	\$19,390,000,000,000	\$7,965,000,000,000	\$931,000,000,000	\$17,950,000,000,000
Major Ports/ Terminals	15	7	2	54
Airports	507	346	151	13,513
Territory (sq km)	9,596,960	3,287,263	796,095	9,826,675
Population	1,367,485,388	1,251,695,584	199,085,847	321,368,864

Source: Author's Own.

Data Sources:

URL: www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat.

2014 est URL: www.globalfirepower.com/armor-tanks-total.asp.

URL: www.globalfirepower.com/navy-ships.asp.

2015 est URL: www.globalfirepower.com/aircraft-total-fighters.asp.

2016 est URL: www.globalfirepower.com/navy-submarines.asp.

2015 est URL: www.globalfirepower.com/active-military-manpower.asp.

URL: www.globalfirepower.com/available-military-manpower.asp.

SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2015, URL: <http://milexdata.sipri.org>.

2015 est CIA World factbook.

URL: www.globalfirepower.com/major-ports-and-terminals.asp.

both the single-minded pursuit of self-interest like any other nation-state and a ‘civilizational’ outlook, committed to the ideal of a world community governed by democratic values and institutions. The spirit of Afro-Asian solidarity, voiced by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the launching of the Non-aligned Movement in Bandung in 1954 reflected this apparent duality of India’s foreign policy. Not surprisingly, the ‘peaceful nuclear explosion’ of 1974 and subsequently the nuclear tests of 1998 have both been a source of intense speculation about India’s real intentions.⁹

More recent reports indicate that with an arsenal of 110–130 nuclear weapons, Pakistan might have overtaken India, which is reputed to possess between 100 and 120 of these weapons of mass destruction. India, however, continues to have the edge over Pakistan regarding active troops. China, on the other hand, has maintained the country’s superiority over India on all conventional as well as nuclear arms. The United States, of course, has more fire power than all of them taken together. The same holds for American military spending (Table 8.1).

The ambiguity of India’s foreign policy leads to questions about specific issues as well as those of a general character. Is Indian foreign policy, steeped in the 1950s jargon of non-alignment and injustices meted out to the ‘Third World’ out of sync with India’s growing economic presence in the global arena? Has her diplomacy kept in step with her growing arsenal of conventional and nuclear weapons? Is India still the ‘quixotic’ lone warrior, seeking a form of world politics without power, despite her recently acquired nuclear teeth? Has the flip-flop of India-Pakistan relations finally given way to some solid and sustained progress towards a peaceful and stable regime?¹⁰ Finally, is India’s moral grand-standing merely a pragmatic gambit to put a foot in the door of the nuclear club without quite appearing to want to do so? In other words, is India ‘playing nuclear poker’, albeit in the name of justice and international order?

The chapter responds to these questions through an analysis of the evolution of India’s foreign and security policy from the early days when Jawaharlal Nehru gave it the stamp of his personality, to the rising power that India has become in the twenty-first-century. The chapter considers India’s evolving foreign policy in the light of the constellation of political forces in the domestic arena, the country’s military capacity, arms procurement and deployment, threat perception, and India’s relations with the South Asian region and the wider world. The comprehension of these problems is crucial for a proper appreciation of the dilemmas and tribulations of India’s foreign policy, particularly with regard to the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first-century.

Strategy and context in the making of India’s foreign policy

India’s international relations revolve around some core issues, each of which impinges on the South Asian region. The most important of these are, in order of importance, borders and territory disputes (with Pakistan regarding Kashmir, and China regarding the disputed status of Arunachal Pradesh, shown as Chinese territory on Chinese maps¹¹), international rivers (India-Pakistan, India-Nepal, and India-Bangladesh), energy (prospective oil pipelines to run over Iran-Pakistan-India, and/or Myanmar-Bangladesh-India), security—particularly cross-border terrorism—and the smuggling of drugs.

The dilemmas and contradictions that mark India’s foreign policy should be seen in the larger context of location at the geographic centre of South Asia, the disputed

status of Kashmir (already indicated in Chapter 1), and the tradition of non-alignment as the basis for India's foreign policy. The conflict over Kashmir led to war between India and Pakistan in 1947–48, 1965 and 1999. In addition, there is an ongoing 'proxy war', being fought between the Indian army and Kashmiri militants, and cross-border terrorism. In retrospect, the politics of conflict and insurgency in Kashmir appears as a mute testimony to the ideological battle between two different theories of the state in South Asia. The controversy, as we saw in Chapter 2, was started by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and Mohandas Gandhi before Independence through the advocacy of the 'two nation' theory by the former, and opposition to it from the latter. After Partition, Kashmir became the new symbol of this old struggle. The State of Jammu and Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, is claimed by Pakistan as proof of the legitimacy of the 'two-nation' theory. Challenging the Pakistani claim to Kashmir on account of its Muslim majority, India justifies its claim to Kashmir as evidence of the credibility and sustainability of India's status as, 'secular' state. In 1948, in the face of an invasion of Kashmir by armed tribesmen from the North-West, with the backing of regular Pakistani troops, instead of letting the much better-equipped Indian army push the Pakistani invaders all the way back to the North-Western frontier of the princely state of Kashmir, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru referred the issue to the United Nations (UN). However, instead of ordering the invaders to go back to where they had come from, as Nehru had evidently hoped would happen, the UN dispatched monitors to supervise the actual Line of Control (LoC), separating the troops, and ordered a plebiscite to be conducted. From then on, the Kashmir issue got embroiled with the Cold War, becoming a pawn in the rivalry between India and Pakistan, supported, respectively, by the Soviet Union and the United States. The struggle to regain Kashmir, militarily at first, and through a plebiscite when the separatist movement in the Kashmir valley gained momentum in the 1980s, became the major focus of Pakistani policy. Later on, as an ally of the United States in the war against terrorism, Pakistan became the beneficiary of American support on a broad range of issues, including that of Kashmir.

In the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center in New York, on 11 September 2001, Pakistan re-emerged as the key strategic partner of the US government in the South Asian region. This reversed the middle-term trend of US policy aimed at improving Indo-US relations, and inducted the US as a key player in South Asia's regional politics. The attraction of India as an emerging market and as a possible balancing factor against China, along with the efforts of the Indian government to gain recognition of its nuclear status have induced a sense of balance, reciprocity and pragmatism in Indo-US relations. On the Indian side, in place of the shrill ideological rhetoric of the past, one now finds a more moderate, pragmatic, and nuanced approach to the United States, as well as to Pakistan.

In India, as in Pakistan and many other post-colonial states, foreign policy becomes an instrument for nation-building. India's colonial history, the post-colonial attempts to revive pre-modern political symbols, and the democratic and federal structure of the political system are sources of influence on foreign and security policies. These facets of her politics affect Indian policy in a manner that is radically different from Western nation-states, which are products of a long process of nation-building, industrialization, and state-formation. They seek the promotion of national interest through their diplomatic and strategic initiatives. As a post-colonial 'state-nation', where the process

of nation-building, rather than preceding state-formation, follows it, India is comparatively more complex in its rhetoric. For India, as for others in her position, international politics, in addition to being used as an instrument of national interest, also plays a symbolic role in the building of collective identity.

Domestic and international constraints on foreign policy

The ambiguity of India's foreign policy leads to questions about India's position on specific issues as well as those of a general character of Indian foreign policy. Did the spectacular array of South Asian leaders at the inauguration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inauguration signify a regional turn in India's foreign policy? In the same vein, one must ask—did Modi's trips to Japan, the United States and Australia, and the establishment of the BRICS bank, in rapid succession, and more recently, the invitation to the President of the United States to be India's guest of honour at the Republic Day parade—a highly symbolic act—indicate India's aspiration for a global role? Or, is this all a balancing act, signalling different trajectories to different constituencies, while mystical India keeps her own counsel?

Students of the international politics of India can get a heuristic grasp of this complex process in terms of a 'tool-box' (see Figure 8.1) which considers the inputs and the processing of these in the form of a two-level game where national decision-makers seek to identify an option that would be best placed for domestic opinion and acceptable in the international arena. The alternative courses of action typically consist of capitulation to the demands being made on the country, the assertion of national interest in international organisations or war against the adversary. The national leadership considers these alternatives in terms of their implications for domestic and international politics, and chooses an option that is saleable at home and acceptable abroad. The preferences of the national decision-makers are influenced by perceived interests of their own support base and those considered as national interests, the symbolic value of the issues at stake, deeply held values that are culturally embedded and the personal propensity of leaders to take risks or to be risk-averse. The choices also seek to balance the costs and benefits deriving out of treaty obligations and the likely gains from the choices made. Whatever its own preference-ordering, the national leadership considers its own preference in light of domestic and international implications and makes a strategic choice on the basis of a cost-benefit-calculation involving the two sets of constraints. A feedback-loop connects the outcome of a given foreign policy decision for future sequences of the game.¹²

The chapter will draw on this tool box to analyse the unfolding of India's foreign policy under successive Prime Ministers from Nehru to the present day. Figure 8.1 presents the constraints on foreign policy in a skeletal form. It shows how the decision-maker must juggle the policy preferences of the domestic support base and internal stakeholders, as well as his own assessment of national interest, his perception and deeply seated values and, his tendency to take risks or be risk averse. These calculations influence the policy choice between three possibilities on any given issue—to assert the preference of his own country over the adversary in an aggressive manner, to appease the adversary by capitulating, or, to engage the adversary, now seen as a partner, in a negotiation about the legitimate interests of the country. This skeletal design, applied to the Indian context, yields a more specific image of the constellation of forces (Figure 8.2).

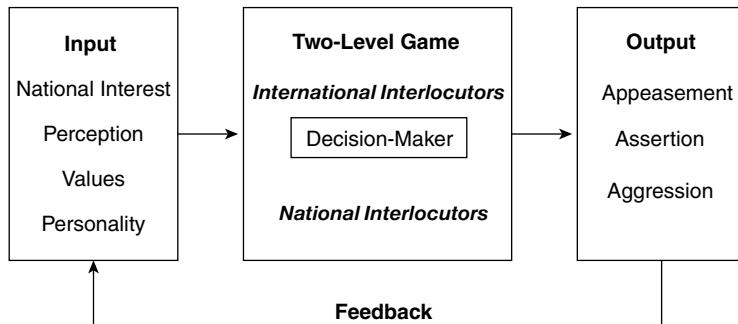


Figure 8.1 Toolbox: domestic and international constraints on foreign policy.
Source: Drawn by author.

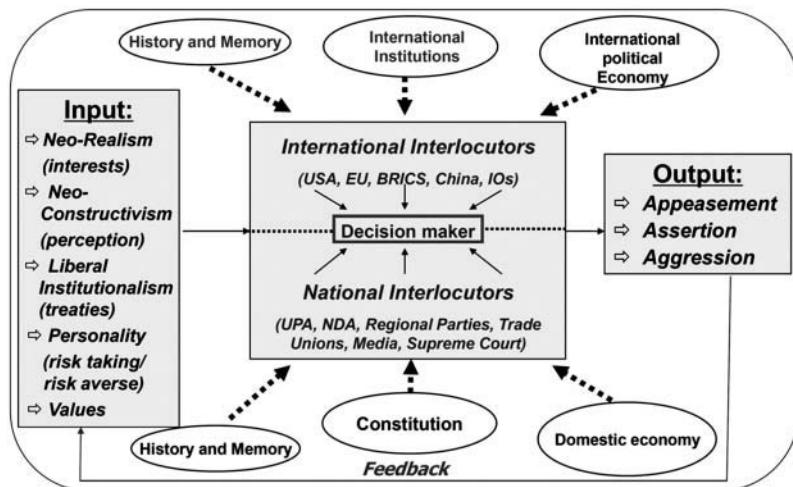


Figure 8.2 Specification of the general model to the context of domestic and international constraints on India's foreign policy.

Source: Drawn by author.

A chronology of wars and treaties of 'non-aligned' India

During the early decades after Independence, foreign policy rarely featured as an issue in India's political life. Though Nehru saw foreign policy as an integral part of nation-building, and the logic of non-alignment underpinned his worldview in both arenas, foreign policy choices were the preserve of the policy-making elites and not the mass electorate. The contrast between the tepid national debate following the Chinese debacle of 1962 and the national debate on the course of India's nuclear policy in 2008 that rocked the nation and the January 2, 2016 terrorist attack on Pathankot airbase show how foreign policy has become enmeshed with domestic policies during six decades of post-Independence politics.

India is the biggest power in South Asia, and the significance of this major power, in terms of how the country sees itself and how others perceive emerging India, is a key consideration for regional politics. That said, there is considerable force to the argument that the dynamics of security and international politics of the region are crucially contingent on the India-China-Pakistan triangle (Mitra 2001). India is a democratic state and an open society, both of which give a greater sense of transparency, to her security profile and malleability to her policies towards neighbours. Foreign observers, depending on their own national origin and context, place their bets on predictions of India's next move either as the 'regional bully' or the 'regional push-over'. India, in its contradictory style, often proves both speculations to be right, appearing in the process to be either mystical and moralistic, or utterly devoid of principle or doctrine.¹³

India's foreign policy is affected by a number of forces unique to South Asia as a geographic region. Politics of the region is marked by inter-state wars, intra-state conflicts requiring the use of armed forces to quell secessionist movements, and cross-border terrorism as well as low-intensity conflict (Box 8.1). The dominant presence of India at the centre of South Asia's geographic location and her power relative to the other states of the region creates an asymmetry within the region. This has adversely affected the chances for closer regional integration. In the same vein, the nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan on the one hand, and India and China on the other, focuses international attention. Indian policy-makers chafe at the impression that regarding nuclearisation, their country is scrutinized with more alacrity and censure than Pakistan or China, both of which have been involved in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and delivery capacity.

While the switch from an exclusive reliance on conventional weapons to a mixed arsenal with unspecified numbers of nuclear warheads, has brought a sense of stability reminiscent of the Cold War to the region, the warring neighbours have devised their own form of low-intensity war that has transformed the borders of South Asia into areas of high tension.

Furthermore, the lack of significant regional trade accounts for the absence of incentive towards the amelioration of relations.¹⁴ Further, there are constant allegations of the use of militancy and cross-border terrorism by the governments and rogue elements to enhance their interests, producing a no-war/no-peace situation, degenerating into overt conflict from time to time. The internationalization of domestic problems (for example, treatment of religious or ethnic minorities), the entanglement of domestic politics with international relations (for example, the status of Kashmir) and the absence of a regional conflict-solving body further lower the chances of regional cooperation.

To cope with these manifold challenges, India, the key player of the region, has constantly sought to balance her declared policy of non-alignment with treaties that the country has signed with regional and extra-regional powers (Box 8.2). Each of the major wars of South Asia, or war-like incidents, has sparked off both bouts of doctrine elaboration by the government and political controversies around them. Often, they have played the role of a catalyst for new alliances.

The evolution of India's foreign policy

Since Independence, India's foreign policy has evolved through roughly three different phases. The first phase was the period of classical non-alignment when India sought to chart a middle course between the two rival camps—of the Western and the Soviet

BOX 8.1 WAR, MILITARY OPERATIONS AND TERRORIST ATTACKS, WITH IMPLICATION FOR FOREIGN POLICY (1947–2016)

A. Inter-state wars

- 1947–48 First Indo-Pak Conflict
- 1962 Sino-Indian Border War
- 1965 The Second Indo-Pak War
- 1971 The Third Indo-Pak War: creation of Bangladesh
- 1999 Kargil conflict (a limited war between India and Pakistan)

B. Other internal/international military operations

- 1947 Punjab Boundary Force deployment
- 1947 Junagarh deployment
- 1948 Hyderabad police action
- 1961 ‘Liberation’ of Goa
- 1984 Operation Bluestar
- 1987 The sending of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka

C. Counter-insurgency operations

- 1954–74 Anti-insurgency operations in Nagaland
- 1965–67 Anti-insurgency operations in Mizoram
- 1971 Anti-insurgency operations in Tripura and Mizoram
- 1985–90 Anti-terrorist deployments in Punjab
- 1989 Anti-terrorist deployments in Jammu and Kashmir
- 1991 Anti-insurgency operation in Assam: operation Rhino

D. Terrorist attacks, with an impact on foreign policy

- 2001 Attack on the Indian parliament
- 2007 Samjhauta Express bombings
- 2008 Suicide bombing of the Indian Embassy in Kabul
- 2008 Terrorist attack on Mumbai
- 2016 Terrorist attack on Pathankot airbase

blocs—and generate influence by playing a pivotal role between the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR. The policy was jettisoned in the second phase under Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded her as Prime Minister in 1984, following her assassination. Both followed a policy that sought to portray India's status as the dominant power of South Asia. The third phase began with the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of a multi-polar world. With the nuclear tests of 1998, the phase acquired its distinct character of a mixed strategy—of investment in nuclear weapons, carrying capacity, purchase of conventional weapons—combined with economic diplomacy, strategic alliances, and negotiation with the USA, European Union (EU), China, and Pakistan, and international organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO). The entry of the NDA into power under the

BOX 8.2 INDIA'S-MAJOR TREATIES (1947–2015)

- 1954 Bandung Declaration¹⁶
- 1960 Indus Water Treaty (India-Pakistan, mediated by the World Bank)
- 1966 Taskent Declaration (India-Pakistan, mediated by the USSR)
- 1971 Indo-Soviet treaty of Friendship and cooperation
- 1972 Simla Agreement (India-Pakistan) India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)
- 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord
- 1990 Agreement between India and Pakistan on Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities
- 1993 (India-China) Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)
- 1996 India-Bangladesh Ganga Waters Treaty
- 2005 India-China Border Agreement
- 2008 (Fully approved) USA-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Non-proliferation Enhancement Act (initiated in 2006)
- 2015 10-point Comprehensive Dialogue with Pakistan (replacing 8-point Composite Dialogue)

leadership of Prime Minister Modi, Indian foreign policy has taken a more vigorous form. Whether it is the beginning of a new phase, or a re-affirmation of the course of the third phase remains an open question.¹⁵

Over two decades before India's Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru emerged as the person in charge of the foreign policy of the Indian National Congress (INC). His succession to the stewardship of the foreign policy of India after Independence was, in this sense, only natural. Nehru's approach to foreign policy, which went through many metamorphoses under his successors- namely Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964–66), Indira Gandhi (1966–77, 1980–84) and Rajiv Gandhi (1984–89), represents a mix of liberal internationalism and a 'norm driven' realism. It was originally characterized by a sceptical view of the United States, reliance on the Soviet Union, and support for other anti-colonial movements. Nehru acknowledged the problems facing a weak state in the international system and consequently aimed at cooperation where possible and necessary. This approach got a rude jolt in India's defeat in the 1962 Indo-Chinese border war, and started generating resentment against an unbalanced international power system. For Nehru's successors, subcontinental hegemony became the overriding goal of foreign policy. Pakistan, China, and the United States were seen as hostile towards India. This thinking, which reached its peak in the Indo-Pak war of 1971, persisted until 1991–92, when the liberalization of India's economy created a radically new strategic environment for foreign policy.¹⁶

According to Cohen, the Nehruvian origins of strategic thinking in post-Independence India have been enriched by two additional currents which he calls, 'realist' and 'revitalist', to distinguish them from the overall idealism of Jawaharlal Nehru. The realists started as offshoots from the generally liberal, market-oriented, pro-American Swatantra party in the mid-1960s. They held a pragmatic view of Sino-Indian and Indo-US relations and supported increased economic openness and integration with the

international market forces. The revitalists take a more regional perspective, stemming from their preoccupation with spreading Indian influence over South Asia, which they see as essentially the main theatre of action for Indian foreign policy. They, like the realists, deem nuclearisation necessary. The synthesis of realist and revitalist perspectives was represented by the NDA Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (Cohen 2001: 47).¹⁷

The period during the Indo-China war of 1962 and the Indo-Pak war of 1971, when Pakistan gradually came closer to China, caused major rethinking, because India had to confront the possibility of a war on two fronts. The increase in defence allocation during this period (Table 8.2), and increased military cooperation with the West, saw the beginning of a greater security consciousness. After Indira Gandhi came to power in 1966 she displayed a greater willingness to link politics, foreign policy, and security.

Indira Gandhi also turned India in the direction of the Soviet Union with the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, signed on 9 August 1971. After 1971, the balance of power in South Asia was altered significantly, with the defeat of Pakistan in 1971, the emergence of Bangladesh and the ‘peaceful nuclear explosion’ of 1974 which gave yet another indication of an ‘Indira Doctrine’, which visualized India as the hegemonic power of South Asia (Mansingh 1984).¹⁸

Though the onset of liberalization of the Indian economy prepared the ground for a rapprochement with the United States and China, the contradictory pulls within India’s strategic thinking continued from 1990 to 1999. The collapse of the Soviet Union, long

Table 8.2 Military expenses (1996–2015)

	USA		China, P.R.		India		Pakistan	
	US \$ million (current USD)*	% of GDP						
1996	271,417	3.4	14,563	1.7	9,905	2.5	3,548	5.6
1997	276,325	3.2	16,105	1.7	11,465	2.7	3,320	5.3
1998	274,278	3.0	17,528	1.7	11,921	2.8	3,219	5.2
1999	280,969	2.9	21,027	1.9	13,896	3.1	3,081	4.5
2000	301,697	2.9	22,930	1.9	14,288	3.1	2,973	4.0
2001	312,743	2.9	27,875	2.1	14,601	2.9	2,842	4.1
2002	356,720	3.2	32,138	2.2	14,750	2.9	3,273	4.2
2003	415,223	3.6	35,126	2.1	16,334	2.7	3,723	4.1
2004	464,676	3.8	40,353	2.1	20,239	2.8	4,128	4.0
2005	503,353	3.8	45,729	2.0	23,072	2.8	4,587	3.9
2006	527,660	3.8	55,337	2.0	23,952	2.5	4,969	3.7
2007	556,961	3.8	68,090	1.9	28,255	2.3	5,343	3.4
2008	621,131	4.2	864,121	1.9	33,002	2.6	5,227	3.1
2009	668,567	4.6	105,634	2.1	38,722	2.9	5,275	3.1
2010	698,180	4.7	115,701	1.9	46,090	2.7	5,975	3.1
2011	711,338	4.6	137,967	1.9	49,634	2.6	6,955	3.1
2012	684,780	4.2	157,446	1.9	47,217	2.5	7,479	3.3
2013	639,704	3.8	177,848	1.9	47,404	2.4	7,645	3.2
2014	609,914	3.5	199,651	1.91	50,914	2.5	8,655	3.3
2015	596,024	3.3	214,787	1.9	51,257	2.3	9,510	3.4

Source: Author’s own.

Data Source: Source Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2015, <http://milexdata.sipri.org> (accessed 27 July 2016).

*Figures are in US \$m., in current prices, converted at the exchange rate for the given year.

a supporter of India on international fora, required a radical change in policy, while economic reforms in India necessitated budget cuts, affecting the military adversely. This might have opened a window of opportunity for Pakistan, which, taking advantage of the onset of militancy in Kashmir, started supporting cross-border insurgency and covert military operations there. On the political front, the unilateralist Gujral doctrine and subsequently the BJP initiatives for a diplomatic opening to Pakistan through the Lahore bus trip (discussed in the next section), and subsequently the Agra summit continued the Indian policy of putting India's relationship with Pakistan on a normal footing. However, Pakistani policy operated on more conservative lines and sought to take advantage of the perceived weakness of the Indian military establishment. One consequence was Kargil war in 1999. However, forceful reaction of India's army saved Kashmir from being severed from the rest of India which was the real objective of the Kargil war from the Pakistani side. This, once again, underscored the need for a coherent Indian strategic doctrine. The section below will discuss some of the pivotal figures and events under successive Prime Ministers in more detail.

The foundational years: Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–64

Utopian visionary, realist Congressman, patrician populist and authoritarian democrat, Nehru's foreign policy presents a unique blend of strategy, vision and tactical errors, ensconced in the context of his understanding of Indian history. The evolution of India's foreign policy during Nehru's watch can be split into three phases. The first phase, from 1947 to 1953, saw Nehru as a key leader of the Third World. The second phase lasted from the Bandung Declaration of 1954 to the debacle of India's China policy as India stood defeated in 1962. One of the key domestic factors was the status of Kashmir. India held on resolutely to the assertion that the status of Kashmir was not disputed and that the areas under Pakistani control (POK) were legally a part of Jammu and Kashmir whose accession to India was final. This view was not shared by many of India's international interlocutors, most trenchantly and consistently contested by Pakistan. In realistic terms, it is this unresolved conflict that underpinned all the major conflicts between India and Pakistan except the 1971 war.

In retrospect, two elements dominated Nehru's Kashmir policy: (i) popular consent rather than religious composition as the basis of the state, and (ii) the Instrument of Accession signed by the King of Kashmir in favour of joining India. However, the representatives of Western powers did not see the Kashmir problem in the same categorical terms and rejected India's claim. Nehru attributed the support by Western states of the Pakistani position to their acceptance of the 'two-nation theory' which saw Pakistan as the designated home of the Muslims of British India which, in their eyes, reinforced the claim of Pakistan on Muslim-majority Kashmir. The whole idea of religion as the basis of state formation was anathema to Nehru's firm belief in the principle of secularism. His second disappointment was the radical shift in position of Sheikh Abdullah. He was the most important Kashmiri leader in the 1940s and an ally of the Indian National Congress who fell afoul of Nehru when he declared Kashmiri independence as his goal. These forces led to the third phase, 1963–64. The traumatic events of 1962 created an occasion for national stock-taking and the resignation of a substantial number of chief ministers and important members of Nehru's own cabinet.

Nehru saw himself first and foremost as a great modernizer and as such, social and economic development was the cornerstone of his political thinking.¹⁹ Defence as a

political and strategic issue was mainly used to advance these objectives. Nehru was deeply distrustful of the use of force as an argument in politics in general; this was reflected in his attitude towards the military. Not surprisingly, no coherent security doctrine developed during the period of Nehru's stewardship, non-alignment being an overall guide to the ways and means of avoiding conflict rather than a strategy of the enhancement of national power and security. India established good neighbourly relations with her smaller neighbours because of treaties with Bhutan 1949, Sikkim in 1950, Nepal in 1950, Burma in 1951 and Ceylon in 1954/1964. Force during this phase was used primarily for domestic purposes, the military action against the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1948 and the Portuguese colonial rule in Goa in 1961 being the exceptions.

The first official declaration of a policy of non-alignment by Nehru took place in 1946. At the same time, similar moves were also made by Burma, Indonesia and Yugoslavia. 1950–54 was the formative period. The role of India gradually shifted to that of the pivot between competing sides in the intensification of the Cold War and the break-up of hostilities in Korea (June 1950). The Korean War, in turn, led to further intensification of the Cold War. The Western strategy consisted of containing communism by military pacts. The outbreak of the Korean War put the non-alignment policy to the severe test, but also offered an opportunity to demonstrate its utility. The policy of the non-aligned countries, contributed in some measure to the lessening of tension and to creating the necessary atmosphere for peaceful negotiations between the two blocs. Both blocs recognized the value of the peace efforts initiated by non-aligned nations, leading to the emergence of an Afro-Asian group in the UN. Since 1954, the consolidation of this policy took place in terms of its ideology and recognition by the two blocs. The full conceptual implications of the non-aligned policy emerged by the end of the period as a doctrine opposed to military pacts, committed to expanding the zone of peace in the world, as summed up in *Panchsheel*—the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (see Box 8.3). Later, these were incorporated into the ten principles in the final communiqué listed at the Bandung Conference, announced a joint statement. This indicated agreement on the five principles by these countries.

The Non-aligned Movement (NAM) was never meant to be a uniform policy for all its adherents on all occasions. It represented a broad similarity in approach to contemporary international situations, expressed in similar policies on certain questions among these nations. Basically, it implied not aligning oneself with either of the two superpowers '*permanently*' and being non-aligned from one another. It suggested a case-by-case approach; each time there was a crisis, a series of consultations was undertaken to decide how to vote in the UN, how to act regarding conflicting parties, what facilities to accord the aggrieved nation, whether to lend support to intervention and to send troops for peace-keeping. It worked because of conventional anti-colonialism, which sometimes facilitated concerted action.

BOX 8.3 PANCHSHEEL—THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

- Mutual respect for other nations' territorial integrity and sovereignty
- Non-aggression
- Non-interference in internal affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful coexistence

Nehru's foreign policy, a joint product of domestic policy and international context, was successful in meeting his main goals: democracy, development, secularism, socialism and peaceful conflict resolution in the domestic arena. In retrospect, in the domain of foreign policy, the achievements appear to have given India a larger than life profile at the height of the Cold War but the salience others attached to India declined sharply after the debacle in the 1962 India-China war. A sense of ambiguity that lies at the heart of India's foreign policy appears to be Nehru's legacy.

The paradigm of non-alignment had seemed optimal in view of Nehru's commitments at home and abroad. China's friendship, however, came with a price tag spelt out by Mao which was, first and foremost, the priority of the national interests of China. These were: the national security and territorial integrity of China; abolition of all unequal treaties; liberation of all China's lost territories, such as Taiwan, Tibet and Hong Kong; readjustment and legitimization of the northern and southern territorial boundaries, making China economically and militarily strong; and reasserting China's historical and cultural greatness. In terms of its foreign policy, China wanted the leadership of the newly emerging Afro-Asian and socialist blocs, which Nehru's India wanted as well. In retrospect, a conflict between these two emerging Asian giants appears to have been inevitable.

Unlike China, which was a revolutionary state, led by a new leadership with a new set of revolutionary objectives, seeking a radically different profile in international politics, India was a 'successor state' to which the outgoing British had transferred power. India was a status-quo power whose main objective was to secure the territorial boundaries that the country inherited from the colonial rulers. To meet this goal, India was willing to go some way to accommodate China. The slogan *Hindi Chini bhai bhai* ('India and China are brothers') was evolved by New Delhi, with the connivance of China, basically to accommodate the demands of China over Tibet. Shortly after Independence and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, India withdrew the military and trade presence in Lhasa set up by the British which had seen Tibet as a buffer between the colonial state and China. However, whereas India saw the McMahon Line—the colonial boundary between India and Tibet—as India's international boundary with China, the Chinese did not recognize it and demanded negotiation of the border. They also demanded political solidarity at an international level, privately viewing Nehru as a stooge of neo-imperialism. India, for them, had choices to make between continuing the path of bourgeois-feudal democracy, and, making a revolutionary break with the past. The refusal of Nehru's India to make a clear choice appeared to the Chinese, (and, many in the West) as prevarication at the best and hypocritical at the worst. The radicalization in India's domestic politics, particularly the growing splits within India's communist movement, opened a window of opportunity for China to export its brand of revolution.

Nehru's perception of India in the world arena was a contrast to that of the Chinese. Nehru wanted India to play a pivotal role between the USA and the USSR, a posture which had yielded an enhanced profile to India in the Korea conflict. India could bolster her economic and political situation through foreign aid from the West and support from the USSR in the Security Council. Regarding China, this required Nehru's India to turn a blind eye to the steady incursion of the Chinese into Aksai Chin. However, when these incursions became public and the Indian parliament demanded action, Nehru, following the so-called 'Forward Policy', ordered the sending of Indian troops to occupy isolated posts located in areas that the Chinese claimed as theirs. Nehru's statement in parliament that the Indian army was under instruction to 'throw

the Chinese out' has been depicted as evidence of Indian intransigence and aggression by the Chinese and scholars sympathetic to the Chinese view.²⁰

The results of the 1962 border war showed the asymmetry of India-China relations in terms of national strategic capabilities. The casualties on the Indian side were heavier than their better prepared adversaries. The casualties on the Chinese side are uncertain as figures were not available, but these were considered to have been far less.²¹ China declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew, thus demonstrating Chinese readiness for negotiation as opposed to Indian intransigence.

The reason behind the Chinese decision remains controversial. Maxwell, sympathetic to Maoist China, has argued that the main intention of the Chinese was to show the Indian argument about the legitimacy of the McMahon Line as an imperialist residue from the colonial past, and to assert China's traditional claims to Aksai Chin and parts of the North-Eastern-Frontier-Agency. The unilateral Chinese withdrawal was meant to assert the Chinese position and to make India negotiate from a more realistic position of the Actual Line of Control. A different argument has emerged from new research, reported in *JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA and the Sino-Indian War* by Bruce Riedel (Brookings Institution Press: 2016) presents a different picture, showing that the Chinese withdraw was a realistic response to the threat of a potential conflict with the United States. We learn from a review:

The border war did not last long. The Chinese crushed the Indians. Mao declared a unilateral ceasefire a month later and withdrew the Chinese forces. He had prevailed over his Asian rival, humiliating the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. But victory was not just about Chinese might. At Galbraith's urging, the Americans had quickly backed he distressed Nehru. An emergency airlift of supplies was sent to Calcutta and a carrier battle group was dispatched to the Bay of Bengal. In the end, Mao judged that the Americans might come to the help of India. He did not want to suffer huge losses of Chinese soldiers so soon after the Korean War. Thus, American deterrence worked and a confrontation between America and China was avoided.²²

The contributions of the 1962 border war to developments in Indian and regional politics were enormous. India's ignominious defeat accelerated the polarization of opinion both on the ideological left and the right and started the process of questioning the Nehruvian consensus, accelerating the search for a more robust foreign policy, based on national power. India's image suffered a serious lack of credibility in South Asia, setting off steady overtures by Pakistan towards China, which had come across as the clear winner in terms of its more successful policy of domestic development and nation-building. India's defeat lowered Nehru's stature and raised larger questions both at home and abroad, about India's stability, the appropriateness of its institutional arrangements, and the suitability of non-alignment as the basis of its foreign policy.

Ironically, the debacle of 1962 set in motion forces that prepared the ground for the 1965 war against Pakistan, producing an unlikely hero in Lal Bahadur Shastri, successor to Nehru as India's Prime Minister. Short in stature, hailing from a modest background, and relatively unknown in national politics except for a short stint as a cabinet minister, Shastri, with his slogan *jai jawan, jai kisan* ('victory to the soldier, victory to the peasant'), left behind a legacy of war as an integral part of national politics and foreign policy, necessary when just, and portent of glory and national honour. Indian troops crossed

the international frontier to attack Pakistan—Shastri's biographer informs us²³—for the first time in the history of the nation, under instructions from the diminutive Shastri. The groundwork for the decisive 1971 war against Pakistan was set.

The Pakistani game plan in 1965 was to fight a quick war in which, with tanks playing a key role, cutting Kashmir off from the Indian mainland seemed an attractive option. The military regime of Pakistan found in the battle over Kashmir a readymade alibi, excellent to rally the people of Pakistan. The alliance with China was sealed with the 1963 Sino-Pak treaty which ceded part of PoK to China and helped build the Karakoram Highway, creating a direct road link between Pakistan and China. At the same time, US-Pak relations were in good functioning order, with a steady supply of American arms and training for the Pakistani military, as a conspicuous counter-example to India's non-alignment.

The perception on the Pakistani side was to strike India at her most vulnerable, at a time when the new leadership had not yet settled down, to create conditions to 'defreeze' the Kashmir issue, and force India to come to negotiate. The parallel with the Chinese strategy in 1962 was uncanny. Much like the Chinese incursions of 1959 prior to the invasion of 1962, the Pakistani action started with 'probing' encounters. Pakistani strategists chose to engage Indians at vulnerable spots, such as in the Rann of Kutch on the Gujarat coast, preliminary to an 'all-out' but disguised invasion of Kashmir by the Pakistan army. It was to start in the form of 'guerrilla warfare', camouflaged as 'revolt' by the local population, to be followed by a full-scale assault by the Pakistan army in the Chhamb area of Kashmir, leading to a massive lightning armoured attack to capture Amritsar in Punjab, and as much more Indian territory as possible. These were to be eventually exchanged for Kashmir.²⁴

In retrospect, it was Shastri's tactical thinking and a stroke of good luck that foiled the Pakistani grand strategy. One of Shastri's first acts in office was to establish a personal rapport with defence chiefs, leaders of the opposition, as well as main voices within the Congress party. This helped him build up a strong national consensus to meet the Pakistani challenge in Kashmir. Simultaneously, he took new initiatives in political as well as military matters, relying on populist symbols rather than high policy, and crucially, deciding in favour of the open and unabashed use of force to come to terms with the political problems of the day. It was under Shastri's orders that the Indian army crossed the international frontier, and marched in the direction of Lahore (to relieve pressure on the Chhamb sector in Kashmir). The Indian air force was launched into the battle right at the outset, despite the risk of superior Pakistani aircraft. Shastri was willing to trade land against security when the need for it arose.

The Indian strategy greatly benefited from the failure of the 'spontaneous' mass uprising in Kashmir in the 1965 Indo-Pak war which Pakistani strategists had banked on. In the short run, there were no clear winners in the war, although India more than held her own against superior Pakistani armaments and fighter planes, which, from the Indian point of view, was the significant outcome. The Tashkent agreement was a successful attempt by the USSR to increase its influence in South Asia, and to develop a concept of a collective Asian security system by weaning Pakistan away from the United States, and paving the way for a '20 Year Treaty of Peace and Friendship' with India under Indira Gandhi. In terms of civil-military relations, 1965 initiated closer integration of the two. On the Pakistani side, in the long run, 1965 resulted in a loss of authority of the military leaders and eventually contributed to the rise of a political leadership under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Indira Gandhi and a new decisiveness in Indian foreign policy

The sudden death of Shastri in 1966, just after he had signed the Tashkent agreement with Pakistan, left Indian politics in disarray because there was no clear successor and, though the country was riding high on a surge of patriotism, there was no clear policy or institutionalized policy-making body to coordinate security and foreign relations. Besides, the indicators of domestic growth were grim. The Third Five-Year Plan (1961–66) had ended with a drought bringing catastrophic agricultural failure and the need for food imports from the United States. The World Bank, as part of an aid package, had enforced devaluation of the rupee in 1966, rudely shaking national confidence in the soundness of the economy. Shastri's successor, Indira Gandhi, was a weak and provisional leader who, the scheming power-brokers of the Congress Party expected, would eventually pave the way for a member of the 'syndicate', an informal body consisting of important regional leaders and members of the Congress organization. For her part, as subsequent events proved, Indira Gandhi had other ideas.

Meanwhile, Pakistan, under the leadership of General Yahya Khan, seemed well poised to raise its international profile as an agent brokering a rapprochement between the United States and China, during this period of domestic instability in India. However, a major domestic crisis emerged in Pakistan following the General Elections of 1970 in which the Awami League swept the polls in East Pakistan, winning an overall majority in Pakistan's national assembly and staking its claim to form the government, generating a regime crisis and a confrontation between East and West Pakistan. On 25 March 1971, an army of 40,000 West Pakistani soldiers descended on East Pakistan, unleashing a systematic reign of terror. The leader of the Awami League, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was arrested and airlifted to a jail in West Pakistan. The bloodshed unleashed by the Pakistani army created a massive flight of refugees to India, eventually reaching the figure of 10 million.

There were important changes afoot in the diplomatic environment of South Asia. The dominant position that the USSR had achieved in 1966 as the peacemaker between India and Pakistan was challenged by an emergent Pakistan, and the new USA-China-Pakistan axis. China was challenging the USSR for leadership of the communist world and building an anti-India alliance with Pakistan. The Indian response had been to seek to counter-balance it with the Indo-Soviet treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation of 1971, which guaranteed mutual consultation in the case of attack on either of the two and appropriate measures to ensure peace with security for its partners. Indira Gandhi, had, in the meantime, following the split of the Congress party in 1969, consolidated her hold over the party in alliance with the Indian left and won a resounding victory in the 1971 parliamentary election.

In the event, when India entered the war in East Pakistan to fight the Pakistani army jointly with the Bangladeshi freedom fighters, the USA-Pakistan-China axis swung into action, putting India under pressure to restrain the freedom fighters while manoeuvring to get the UN to send observers to East Pakistan. At this juncture, the USSR came to India's rescue, blocking the US and China in the Security Council by applying the veto three times and balancing the American seventh fleet, and, according to some accounts, threatening to attack Sinkiang in China. At home, Shastri's policies—the 'nationalization' of the security issue—were adopted by Indira Gandhi, who, following the military success of India, reaped great electoral dividends in terms of an important victory in the elections to regional assemblies in 1972.

In military terms, the war was a complete victory for India. The Pakistani army in Bangladesh capitulated and a total of 93,000 officers and men were taken prisoner. However, the political outcomes were not as clear. The 1971 war temporarily established Indian supremacy over South Asia. India signed a 25-year Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace with the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1972, and appeared poised to enter a period of undisputed Indian hegemony over South Asia. But this was not to be.²⁵ The main reason for the ambiguous political consequences was that the Simla Agreement of 1972, between India and Pakistan did not paper over the wide gulf that separated the perceptions and policies of the two neighbours. India failed to secure a lasting solution to the Kashmir dispute. The territory on the Western front that the Indian army had brought under its control was transferred back to Pakistan, without, as some Indian commentators have alleged, any commitment from Pakistan to giving a semblance of permanence to the Line of Control (LoC).

In fact, the rump state of Pakistan regrouped its forces swiftly, maintained its pivotal role between the USA and China, securing support from both. When the United States and the USSR got engaged in Afghanistan, Pakistan became the main beneficiary of massive American support. Indira Gandhi, who got embroiled in domestic politics, the state of Emergency, and then her unceremonious ouster from power, ceased to be a player in regional politics for a while. The assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975 removed a source of support for India and swiftly brought Pakistan back in. The smaller neighbours took the initiative to launch the SAARC, which India perceived mainly as an attempt to set firm limits to any hegemonic ambitions the country might have developed because of the military victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war.

The only formal clause of the Simla Agreement (1972) that came across as in the interest of India was a provision for conflicts to be solved bilaterally, without any third-party intervention—a tactic that Pakistan had often resorted to in the past against India. Both sides also committed themselves to refraining from the organization, assistance or encouragement of any act detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations. In Jammu and Kashmir, the LoC (of 17 December 1971) was to be respected by both sides without prejudice to recognized positions of either side, neither side was to 'seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations, both sides were to refrain from the threat or use of force in violation of this line'.

In retrospect, the 'Indira Doctrine' appears to have been more rhetoric than reality. The gains of 1971 to India's international profile and her capacity were short-lived. Within two years of signing the Simla Agreement, Pakistan was busy mobilizing support within the UN and among Islamic countries to bolster its claims to Kashmir and was engaged in buying arms from the USA. The American tilt towards China counterbalanced the enhanced stature of India as South Asia's dominant force—and reduced the significance of the close ties between the regime of Indira Gandhi and the Soviet Union.

The assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by her two Sikh bodyguards—seeking revenge for the attack on the Golden Temple in the holy city of Amritsar by the Indian army—put to the test the survival of the attempt by India to work out a sphere of influence that would bring the whole of South Asia under Indian hegemony. Rajiv Gandhi, Indira's son and successor to the position of Prime Minister, was a relatively new face in South Asian politics, whom many expected to bring a new era of peace, cooperation and progress to South Asia. The ascent of Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister of Pakistan—she was also a relatively youthful leader with modern ways—reinforced these expectations. Anointed with a massive majority in the parliamentary elections of

1985, Rajiv Gandhi set about putting India's political landscape in order. But the grand initiative did not last beyond a couple of years. By the late 1980s, the regime was tainted by the Bofors scandal. The accusation of financial kickbacks by the Swedish firm which produced these field guns to the Congress Party was never proved but continued to sap the legitimacy and vitality of Rajiv's leadership. The old difference with Pakistan on the status of Kashmir resurfaced, leading eventually to the massive mobilization of the Indian army known as Brasstacks. But the final blow came with the debacle faced by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) sent to disarm the Tamil Tigers and help Sri Lanka solve the ethnic conflict peacefully.

In 1984, upon taking up office as Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi had expressed concern at the deteriorating ethnic situation in Sri Lanka and stated that India did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of that country. However, the steady flow of Tamil refugees into India had put pressure on the government for a credible reaction. The Sri Lankan government agreed to undertake secret talks with Tamil 'terrorists' (under Indian persuasion), but by early 1987 there had still been no progress in negotiations. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka imposed a military blockade on Jaffna peninsula, and in response India's air drop of food to Jaffna (violating Sri Lanka's air space) showed Indian determination to play the role of regional peacemaker. The 'Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement 1987' specified the conditions needed to establish peace and normalcy in Sri Lanka', which, under this agreement, was to recognize Tamil as the official language, lift the state of Emergency, and to not to seek military help from any other country. In return India was to ensure that Indian territory would not be used for 'activities prejudicial to the unity, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka', and to provide military assistance in implementing the accord.

Accordingly, Indian troops (organized as the IPKF, whose numbers would soon reach 70,000) were airlifted to Sri Lanka. The IPKF was dispatched to Sri Lanka under the Indo-Sri Lankan accord (1987) signed by Rajiv Gandhi and J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka. In retrospect, the move was deeply flawed because there was no consensus on the perception of the mission by the key players. Indian policy was dictated by the commitment to the peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka—a process to be brokered by India and not by any other extra-regional force. The commitment of the Sri Lankan government was limited to the use of the IPKF to counterbalance the Tamil Tigers, but not necessarily to a genuine federal power-sharing as in India. The Tamil Tigers themselves welcomed the IPKF as a short-term respite from the Sri Lankan army. The Tamil Tiger leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was not a party to the accord. The Tamil Tigers were only biding their time; once they thought the time was ripe, they turned against the IPKF. Fresh elections in Sri Lanka brought the Sinhala Nationalist Government of Premadasa, which was strongly anti-Indian. Upon taking office, Premadasa asked the Indians to leave, which they eventually did, having lost 1,100 men. 'The verdict on Rajiv Gandhi's Sri Lanka accord can only be that it was a dismal failure' (Nugent 1990: 116).²⁶

An analysis of the limits to India's power under Rajiv Gandhi reveals the structural constraints and shortcomings that have been characteristic of Indian foreign policy. There were four main factors at play. In the first place, Indian policy was identified too much with the personality of the Prime Minister and not seen as the outcome of institutional decision-making. Prime ministerial domination of foreign policy kept it from becoming professional. The failure of the Indian initiative in Sri Lanka can partly be blamed on the lack of coordination between government and intelligence agencies

(at one time, India had three different Sri Lankan policies simultaneously). Second, the doctrine of *Panchsheel* set an ideological limit to national power, offering a blend of liberal goals and enlightened self-interest in principle, but in practice, India's policy managed to combine the worst of both worlds. Third, India's international profile and size produce an asymmetry in her relations with her neighbours. India is both too large compared to any given neighbour and yet not big enough to unambiguously dominate Pakistan or the combined diplomatic strength of the neighbours in regional and international organizations. Finally, the considerations of domestic politics, countervailing forces, and democratic restrictions constrained India's foreign policy, denying it cohesion and strength.

India's failure to put her 1971 dominance of South Asian politics on an enduring basis has both domestic and international explanations. The replacement of Indira with her politically inexperienced son and Rajiv's failure to develop a cohesive foreign policy were the main causes of India's decline. Indian foreign policy aimed at maintaining India's status as a non-aligned country, making short-term adjustments under extreme necessity, but bouncing back to the lonely posture of the moralist, surrounded by interest-seeking, power-maximizing nation-states. In their different ways, Nehru, Indira and Rajiv gave substance to this posture which became increasingly tenuous with time. Did the coming to power of the Hindu nationalist BJP in the parliamentary elections of 1999 as the leading element in the NDA coalition change this mould? This will be the main theme of the next section.

India's search for power in a post-Cold War, multi-polar world

The early 1990s introduced three major developments that radically affected the main parameters of Indian foreign policy. The end of the Cold War and the chaotic disintegration of the Soviet Union deprived India's stance of non-alignment of its main *raison d'être*. In a world no longer polarized along the lines of the Western capitalist bloc and its socialist opponents, non-alignment made little sense. Nor could India rely on Russian backing in the Security Council, Russian armaments, or softer terms of international trade. The second major change that sent India searching for allies in the Western world was the liberalization of India's economy (Chapter 7), and its integration with the international market economy, opening up a new, competitive world full of challenges and opportunities for global alliances. Finally, the emergence of Hindu nationalism as a political force in India's domestic politics, and into governance, brought in long-time critics of non-alignment as the main decision makers of Indian foreign policy.

A brief analysis of the key events during the Hindu nationalist-led NDA government shows that the paradigm shift many expected of India's foreign policy did not quite materialize during Vajpayee's watch. Though it took a Hindu nationalist government to give the decisive push for the actual tests, the nuclear tests of 1998 were the culmination of a programme that had started long before, under Congress governments. More than the nuclear tests, the opening up to Pakistan, symbolized by the 'bus diplomacy', which saw Prime Minister Vajpayee riding a bus into Lahore in February 1999 and being personally received by the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and the signing of the Lahore Declaration, gave a more surprising twist to the new direction of Indian foreign policy. However, the rebound to the older way of suspicion and hostility came swiftly with the Kargil war in July 1999. The setback that Kargil introduced to India-Pakistan relations took a turn for the worse with the Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002. The

Kargil war, with the potential to spread into a regional nuclear war, induced American intervention—behind the scenes to accommodate Indian sensitivity to third-party intervention in regional conflicts—and started the process of an Indo-US rapprochement which eventually led to the Indo-US Framework Agreement of 2006.

The fact that the Kargil war broke out so soon after the signing of the Lahore Declaration raises important questions about the stability of Indo-Pak relations. The tactic of occupying the high-altitude areas of Kargil vacated for winter by the Indian army—a standard practice hitherto—appears to have been mooted as part of a strategy by the Pakistani army, alarmed at the attempts of the civilian government of Pakistan to normalize relations with India before the resolution of long-standing conflicts over Kashmir and the Siachen glacier. It was a political-strategic move which consisted of disrupting vital supplies to Leh by cutting off the Srinagar-Leh road, and outflanking India's defences from the south; it gave a fillip to militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, and a boost to the morale of militants in the Kashmir valley. These factors accelerated the proxy war in Kashmir—which started with the outbreak of insurgency in 1987—and activated militancy in the Kargil and Turtok sectors by opening new routes of infiltration into the valley. These military tactics drew political support from the fundamentalist lobby in Pakistan. India's decisive and restrained reaction (unlike the previous wars in 1965 and 1971, the Indian army and air force did not cross the international frontier and invade Pakistani territory or airspace) and American pressure on Pakistan foiled the grand strategy of the authors of the Kargil war. Specialists' comments show the grim reality of unresolved issues that underpin the apparent diplomatic success of the bus diplomacy.²⁷

Paradoxical as it may sound, overall, during the watch of the Hindu nationalist party, the prospects for peace between India and Pakistan were at their highest since Independence, though as Kargil shows, its progress remained fraught with uncertainties. India's nuclear status invited sanctions and gave an opportunity to the trouble-shooters of the NDA to show that India could walk her way around it. The bus diplomacy proved the point that once in power extremists can become moderate. Perceptions of Vajpayee and evaluations of his foreign policy vary. But three legacies stand out. In the first place, the bomb as symbolic of the search for power has now become accepted Indian policy. The second was the opening up to Pakistan by a Hindu nationalist government through the bus diplomacy. At the time, it had come across as paradoxical, raising further questions. The third was the resolve to continue with the global economic diplomacy of the previous government.

In retrospect, the tendency of extremists to become moderate once in office can be seen in the diplomatic initiatives of the NDA particularly regarding Pakistan. The Lahore Declaration, unlike the Simla Accord, while still paying obeisance to bilateralism with regard to regional conflict, explicitly recognized Kashmir as an 'issue', recommended a composite integrated dialogue and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and the joint resolve to combat 'terrorism'. Most of these policies have been continued by the UPA government that succeeded the NDA in 2004. The UPA has managed to achieve policy continuity despite governmental change, secured a nuclear deal with the United States without having to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and continued the 'composite dialogue' with Pakistan which has made a real difference in the level of hostility between the two neighbours.

The nuclear turn in India's security policy with the tests carried out in 1998 during the watch of the BJP gives rise to one of the most intriguing questions about Indian

foreign policy. Why has India, long an advocate of nuclear disarmament, turned into a candidate for nuclear status? The question takes us back to Nehru. In retrospect, one can argue that India has had a dual nuclear strategy from the outset. The nuclear programme of India started in 1946 under the leadership of Homi J. Bhabha, got an institutional shape in 1948 with the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). The first two civilian nuclear reactors opened in 1956 and 1960. The Chinese testing of a nuclear bomb in 1964 caused anxiety in India's policy community, but the internal leadership struggles did not prove conducive to national policy making in this vital field. The fact that the nuclear 'haves' had no intention of giving up their ownership and control of these ultimate weapons of mass destruction had started making many in India question the Indian policy of nuclear disarmament.

Once the issue of political leadership was resolved, the programme took off, leading finally to the 1974 test of a 'peaceful nuclear device'. However, it led to an embargo on India to the detriment of the development of nuclear research and industry, and a set-back in technical terms. In the 1980s, the nuclear doctrine of 'recessed deterrence' came into vogue. This managed to avoid sanctions while letting it be known that should there be a need for it, the last stage of putting the bomb together could follow easily. The actual tests of 1998 once again led to renewed international embargos, but India was prepared for it this time around. Concerted and successful attempts to engage India in international structures for non-proliferation and India's active cooperation in the war on terror led to the partial lifting of trade embargos and the Framework Agreement of 2006 with the United States of America. However, several complications arose from International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations that prohibit the export of nuclear technology into states that are not signatories of the NPT. India found this policy discriminatory, as the country had to get a special exemption from this body and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to make it possible for her to fully engage in nuclear research, commerce, and industry. The growing energy needs in India and nuclear power, perceived as essential to the growth of the economy, is an additional argument. For this, particularly in view of the dual-use character of the military and civilian forms of nuclear research, Indian diplomacy must assuage the international apprehension that South Asia's regional conflict could escalate into large-scale nuclear war, or that weapons of mass destruction could get into the hands of non-state actors, and that civilian facilities could become military ones. The fears about the aggressive military use of nuclear power masked under a programme of research and development, and about the Indian ability to protect non-safeguarded facilities from terrorists, continue to underlie the reluctance of the nuclear powers with veto rights in the UN Security Council to extend full recognition to India's nuclear status.

Challenges for Indian foreign policy in the twenty-first-century

Some observers of the Indian scene have interpreted India's recent policies as indicative of her ambitions for great power status. At least in terms of rhetoric, quite discernibly, an attitude to that effect often lurks behind the moral postures and grandstanding by India's leaders when they are asked to pronounce on global problems. How much of this is empty rhetoric and how much indicates the real interests and intentions of India will be discussed in this section with reference to a series of specific issues that have gained salience under the Modi government.

Global and regional security regimes

Under the impact of the new contextual and indigenous developments, India is re-examining its approach to international and regional organizations. Nehru was a great supporter of international peacekeeping and mediation initiatives,²⁸ and a staunch advocate of Asian regional cooperation. It was he who organized the Asian Relations Conference even before India achieved Independence. In the new scheme of things, with much of the world clamouring for mediation in Kashmir and India holding out obstinately, claiming that Kashmir is an internal problem of India, the Indian position seriously needs to be looked at afresh. This holds out both a challenge and an opportunity. A proper deal can expedite India's case for a seat on the Security Council. The problem is similar in nature, though different in scale, with regard to threats to India's security links with her South Asian neighbours. Although the sources of India's insecurity often lie within the territories of her neighbours, India has so far refused to have the issues discussed as a common problem of South Asia, preferring instead to take things up at the bilateral level. There is a structural problem here that India needs to solve.

It can be argued that a regional body like the SAARC could perhaps facilitate India's room to manoeuvre. However, regional cooperation can work only when either one of two conditions exists. The first is the presence of a benevolent, dominant regional power that can regulate regional behaviour. The second is the existence of a set of regional players with roughly similar resource endowments or similar threat perceptions from outside the area. The leading role of the United States in the western hemisphere and the successful regional organizations in Europe and South East Asia are pointed out as examples of these conditions. Neither condition obtains in South Asia (Cohen 2001).²⁹ A successful solution to the issue of joint management of security threats at the regional level will reduce India's security burden and increase her support from regional powers in the international arena; but for reasons to be discussed below, India might not find it easy to move in that direction.

A Thaw in India-China relations?

The India-China relationship is sometimes wittily summed up as 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' and 'Hindi Chini bye-bye', and sometimes, 'Hindi-Chini-buy-buy'. The relations between the two neighbours have moved from the early attempts at cordial links, to that of abject hostility and, since the liberalisation of the economy of both countries, a period of vigorous bilateral trade. The easing of tension in India-China relations would help India free up some of the resources that are tied up in the North-East. From all indications, such efforts are afoot; but the traumatic legacy of India's defeat in 1962 is hard to live down. In addition, the relative freedom of political expression and association in India, periodic movements in favour of human rights in Tibet, particularly on high-level visits from China, set limits to India's room for manoeuvre. Beijing has supported separatist and autonomist groups within India in the past. Cohen is sceptical of any chances of early breakthroughs. 'As its own requirements for Middle Eastern oil draw it into the Indian Ocean, China could also emerge as a naval rival to India. The realists in Delhi see China continuing its strategy of encircling and counterbalancing India, preventing it from achieving its rightful dominance of the Subcontinent. This next decade is a transition period when India must cope with expanding Chinese power, achieve a working relationship with the Americans, and cautiously use each to

balance the other's military, economic, and strategic influence. India's new balancing act combines appeasement of China on the issues of Tibet and Taiwan with the pursuit of improved ties with China's other potential balancers, especially Vietnam and Russia (Cohen 2001).³⁰

India's Arunachal Pradesh which the Chinese regards as disputed territory, continues to be a bone of contention. The Economist Intelligence Unit reported an exchange between the two neighbours in 2008 that indicates the high tension that characterizes this dispute.³¹ But the pragmatism that characterizes the policies of both countries suggests that the dispute is unlikely to boil over into open conflict.³² More recently, coinciding with the visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to India in 2014, there was a tense situation along the Line of Actual Control. Chinese soldiers intruded into territory that India claims as its, in Chumar area of Ladakh while President Xi was in India on a three-day visit. The issue was raised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Chinese president, and the two sides announced that they would settle the festering boundary issue as soon as possible. The military stand-off ended peacefully, with both sides withdrawing their troops.

There are shared interests such as the threat of terrorism combined with increasingly restive Muslim minorities. Both sides clearly need to search for a political formula that will allow for minor adjustments in their respective claims so that political honour is satisfied on both sides.

India and the South Asian neighbours

One of the main factors that have blighted India's chances of gaining a seat in the Security Council is the lack of support for the idea in her own neighbourhood. India's neighbours have been constantly wary of her intentions, seeing India alternately as a 'regional bully' or a 'vulnerable giant'. Why do the relationships between India and her 'small' neighbouring states not run smoothly and, instead, continue to be mired in mutual suspicion? What might be short-term and long-term departures from the low-level equilibrium trap in which the relations seem to be permanently trapped?!

The 'small' neighbours, namely Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, are comparable in terms of population to larger European states. The epithet 'small' is indicative of an approach that is part of India's problem in the region. In addition, there are historic and demographic reasons that contribute to the complexity of the problem. Soft borders, illegal immigration, terrorism, smuggling, drugs, water resources, and the treatment of minorities are among the factors that create pressures on India to intervene in what these countries perceive strictly as their domestic affairs. Cohen reports two positive developments in this regard. First, the revolution in economic policy that has swept over India makes it a far more attractive country for all its neighbours and the more developed states of South-East Asia. Indian management expertise, technology, and organizational skills are now widely exported to the rest of Asia, giving substance to the Indian claim that she is a major power. Second, India's democracy is having a great impact on many of its Asian neighbours. For the smaller states of the region, India is something of a model of how to peacefully manage: a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state.

The evolution of India's relationship with her South Asian neighbours has gone through several phases. The first phase was that of the classic non-alignment during the tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister, 1947–64. During this phase, India hardly had a policy towards these countries. Despite the first Kashmir war of 1947–48,

India saw no need to develop a South Asian policy, pitching herself, instead, as a world player, engaged in bringing about peace and a just world. The penalty for this was paid by Nehru's successors, as relationships with Pakistan worsened, leading to a war in 1965. After the acrimonious exchanges with Sri Lanka regarding Indian Tamils rendered stateless in the early 1960s, the Shastri-Sirimavo pact saw the repatriation of two-thirds of them to India—a move that planted the seeds of bitterness among the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka and acted subsequently as a catalyst for Tamil discontent in India regarding their compatriots across the Palk Strait. Indian victory in the 1971 war against Pakistan and the continuation of the 'Indira Doctrine' contributed to fear and suspicion among India's neighbours and added in no small measure to the founding of SAARC, the initiative for which was taken by Bangladesh, with the support of Nepal, as a measure to restrain the hegemonic ambitions of India. India's economic diplomacy in the region following liberalization of the economy in 1991, the 'Look East Policy'³³ and founding of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC), associate membership of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and efforts to accommodate the interests of neighbouring countries within the framework of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) are indicators that there is a realization of the need for a coherent South and South-East Asian strategy among Indian policy makers. This new realization stems from India's need for transport facilities across Pakistan and Bangladesh for oil pipelines, management of international rivers, a concerted strategy to combat terrorists—many of whom use the neighbouring countries as a base for attacks on India—and generate support in international organizations.

The Ganges Waters Treaty with Bangladesh (1996) shows that a successful model of conflict resolution and a balanced relationship with small neighbours are possible. Institutional solutions through intergovernmental negotiations have been found to strike a balance between the Bangladeshi complaint about the unilateral diversion of the waters of the Ganga by India to the detriment of Bangladesh, and the Indian perception that Bangladesh over-pitched its water need and exaggerated the effects of reduced flows. Of course, it is not a straightforward issue of conflict over interests because the tone one takes towards India is itself a contested issue in the domestic politics of Bangladesh—just as in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan—and that makes a negotiated settlement of bilateral conflicts so much more difficult.

In addition to the complex interplay of domestic politics and issues of bi-national relations, the South Asian security dilemma and the India-China-Pakistan strategic triangle is a second factor that deeply affects India's relations with her neighbours—particularly Pakistan. The problem arises from the fact that India needs to strike some form of balance with *both* Pakistan and China. Even if India were to arrive at a balance of force with Pakistan, since Indian strategists must anticipate the need to engage both countries in action at a given time, India will need to acquire an additional capacity over and above what the India-Pakistan balance of forces minimally requires. From the Pakistani point of view, since there is no guarantee that India would not mobilize the additional units putatively meant to meet the Chinese threat against Pakistan, Pakistan needs to provide for this contingency by acquiring a suitable counter-force. Thus, the probability of long-term stability under a balance of force breaks down, which leads to the competitive acquisition of additional military capacity. The problem is not insurmountable. If India's relations with Pakistan, United States, and China could reach some semblance of trust and normality, the rapidly spreading Indian market of

goods, services, and entertainment would do the rest in terms of creating a South Asian common market.

The Kashmir imbroglio is a good example of the cost of the security dilemma to both India and Pakistan, the former because of the steady attrition of the costs of internal war, and the latter because it hinders the potential for the benefits of trade and bi-national cooperation. In consequence, India is still at war in Kashmir, though at a reduced scale compared to the recent past. It is a war of attrition, which India cannot manage to win and Pakistan cannot afford to lose.³⁴

India and the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean region has gained in salience under the Modi government for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, India has increasingly emerged as a stakeholder in terms of shared governance of the region. The Indian diaspora, important for the Modi government as a source of global networking, attracts the attention of the government to the island states of the Indian Ocean with significant diasporic populations. Finally, the Indian navy which has acquired significant firepower, has become active in patrolling, anti-piracy missions and joint manoeuvres with other littoral states. That there is an element of the India-China competition spreading to the Indian Ocean, cannot be denied.

The efforts of some institutions like the Institute for Defence and Strategic Analyses (IDSA) or the Society of Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS), both in Delhi, provide some insight into the growing involvement of India with the Indian Ocean. This is a relatively new development. India is part of the Indian Ocean region, but that has not played a very important role in its foreign policy, especially since all conflicts with neighbouring states are situated at India's land borders. In the perception of most Indian specialists on maritime affairs, an Indian Ocean awareness began to develop because of the importance of SLOCs (Sea Lines of Communication) and the EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones) only very recently. The recent spate of piracy, emanating from the coast of Somalia, has led to a coordinated effort by India and several other countries whose maritime interests have been adversely affected, to police the sea lanes. Virtually all of India's foreign trade, some 97 percent in volume, is transported by sea; in 1994–95 this accounted for an estimated 20 percent of GNP. In addition, as much as 80 percent of India's demand for oil is met from the sea, either carried aboard ships (46 percent) or extracted from offshore areas (34 percent). Experts emphasize the need for Indian foreign policy to concentrate efforts on this area (Roy-Chaudhury 1998: 19–27).³⁵

India and the United States: from ambivalence to engagement

The Indo-American rapprochement is a recent development. The Indian public and policy makers alike have problems understanding why the United States, itself a secular state and a democracy, has not been able to support India against Pakistan, and to a limited extent, against China. The fact that the United States has a firm policy of war against terrorism but condones cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan makes many question its real intentions in Asia.

India has remained ambivalent about the United States in the recent past. Thus, during Operation Desert Storm against Iraq, the world was first treated to pictures of a smiling Indian Foreign Minister in Baghdad, then the grant of refuelling facilities to

American aircraft which were promptly withdrawn when the Indian anti-American lobby got wind of it. Americans, who had their fall-back arrangements in place and only needed an Indian show of support for propaganda purposes, were not amused. With regard to economic diplomacy, in WTO negotiations India often sides with China and Brazil against the United States on the issue of agricultural quotas. However, while the United States tacitly accepts the opposition, it finds India's moral grandstanding about American dominance particularly irritating. On the other hand, Indian policy makers remember with resentment the long American support to the Pakistani position on Kashmir in the United Nations, and the supportive rhetoric of the United States in the 1962 India-China war, which did not translate into actual support on the ground. The sending of the *USS Enterprise* to the Bay of Bengal at the height of the India-Pakistan war of 1971 remains a reminder of American incomprehension of South Asian realities and insensitivity towards Indian sentiments. The increasingly visible and politically active Indian-American lobby in the United States and accommodation of American interests in the Indian Ocean are two factors that the current government appears to have taken on board with regard to the conceptualization and implementation of Indian policy.

American perception of India during the Cold War (1947–89) was influenced by what US policy makers saw as India's irritating show of neutrality and pro-Soviet leanings in real terms. Pakistan was portrayed as the linchpin of American alliances in South, Central, and East Asia, and the USSR was an Indian ally. The Indo-China war in 1962 did not, in any way, turn Indo-US relations in India's favour. The Vietnam War cemented the ideological distance between India and the United States. The events of the 1970s, beginning with the Pakistan-brokered Nixon visit to China, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship (1970), the Indo-Pak war of 1971 where the United States intervened in favour of Pakistan at a late stage, and finally the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) reinforced the distance between India and the United States. The end of Soviet rule in Afghanistan led to the US loss of interest in South Asia, just as post-liberalization India, an emerging market for the United States, became an interesting trading partner. Following the re-emergence of the Taliban and the need to counter-balance, India has emerged as a potential ally—a fact that has led to unprecedented levels of American support for India's nuclearisation.

In addition to their growing proximity, Indian diplomacy has increasingly sought to engage the allies of the United States such as Israel in strategic partnerships. In some cases, India has been able to engage powers which the United States sees as rivals—such as France—or hostile—such as Iran—in deals of mutual interest. Close on the heels of the approval of the Indo-US Nuclear Agreement, India signed a similar agreement with France. As for the nuclear ambitions of Iran, India has sought to maintain a middle position between herself and the United States, which wants it curbed altogether and has pursued the idea of an oil pipeline that would run overland across Pakistan. Even with China, despite the well-known disagreements on the boundary issue, bilateral trade is booming compared to the past.³⁶ India has started actively linking trade and diplomacy. The 2006 'Joint Statement towards Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership' could be seen to counterbalance China's influence in the area. On a larger plane, India is active at the international level as well; it is involved with the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialog Forum (IBSA). Finally, the transformation of India's agrarian economy is opening new vistas of challenge and opportunity, making it possible for her diplomats to work closely with counterparts from other countries.

India as a ‘leading’ power

More than global power, major power or regional power, Mr Modi’s preference has been to describe India as a ‘leading power’—by definition—one capable of giving leadership, though, the level where Modi’s India intends to give leadership is left implicit. India’s contested status as a nuclear power,³⁷ the scale of her armaments (Table 8.2),³⁸ and the huge deployment of ground troops on the western front, particularly in Kashmir, are issues of immediate concern to her South Asian neighbours. Since tension feeds on tension, war in Afghanistan, terrorist attacks in cities all over India—Mumbai, Bangalore, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Kolkata, Delhi, Jammu and Srinagar—mounting tension between India and Pakistan over the issue of cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, and the formal policy of Pakistan to consider the first strike option as part of her strategic response to Indian aggression have contributed to the seriousness of the state of affairs. The probability of the regional conflict escalating into large-scale nuclear war, or weapons of mass destruction finding their way into the hands of non-state actors, have drawn world attention to South Asia, which has had visits in quick succession by political leaders and military delegations from the US, the UK, Germany, France, Russia, and China. India’s ambiguity—building up a stockpile of arms and political rhetoric to match, but not followed up by consequent action—has contributed to the uncertainty of placing India in the hierarchy of powers. The following section, based on a brief analysis of India’s military capacity and public opinion, seen as an indicator of national will, delves into this issue.

Force, of course, remains one of the main elements of power. With regard to India’s defence outlay, the state spends approximately 2.5 percent of its GDP on defence, amounting in 2008 to only US\$21 per person (Cohen 2001).³⁹ By comparison, India’s adversaries spend more. Pakistan spends around 3.1 percent of its national income on the armed forces,—about US\$24 per person- while China spends 2 percent—US\$48 per person.⁴⁰ In comparison to these Asian figures, the United States spends about US\$1,786 per person, which equals 4 percent of the GDP, far ahead of them all. In terms of aggregate figures, India spent about US\$25 billion in 2008 (see Table 8.1).⁴¹ This is modest compared to China’s US\$64 billion, or Japan’s US\$43 billion. Russia spends US\$38 billion, but the United States, which spends around US\$548 billion in military equipment and personnel, is ahead of everyone else.

How do these figures translate into actual power? Cohen (2001: 29) mentions a multiplier effect of ‘low wages and generally high quality of Indian armed forces’ which ‘magnify the effect of India’s mere US\$14 billion in defence spending’. India has the largest volunteer military establishment in the world, with well over one million regular soldiers, sailors, and airmen, and nearly the same number of paramilitary forces. But, in terms of effective logistics, as we learn from Jaswant Singh’s influential *Defending India* (1999), a large part of this force is tied up with other tasks and, as such, should be discounted when it comes to the calculation of national power.

In real terms, the effective power of the Indian army to wage war is less than one might deduce from its strength because the army is deployed in policing activities (for example riot control, providing security for elections). This opinion is echoed by a high-level inquiry commission set up by the Government of India, which states that the withdrawal of paramilitary (army) forces from the borders has, in the past, exacerbated the problems of border management. This internal-external security link persists in recent discussions of India’s security management and underscores the necessity for

analysts to see the two themes as connected. India's contentious democracy and the worsening communal relations have greatly exacerbated the need for effective policing. The police are a State subject under the federal division of powers and, being under the control of India's regional governments, are not always considered politically neutral. At the slightest outbreak of communal violence, therefore, there is a clamour for the deployment of the army. Already overstretched in view of its engagement with anti-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, the North-East, and sundry other trouble-spots where the state is engaged in fighting Naxalites (left-wing guerrillas), the additional demands on its personnel greatly reduce the effective firepower of the armed forces.

India had sought in the past to increase her room to manoeuvre against Pakistan through diversification in arms procurement, which lowers dependence on any particular arms supplier, and through a programme of indigenization which required supply contracts to include a provision for their production in India under licence. The 1965 Indo-Pak war had demonstrated the advantage of this strategy for India, unlike Pakistan, was not dependent on an outside supplier for spare parts or for continued supply. But these advantages have been neutralized through nuclearisation, which has helped Pakistan bridge the gap of 'strategic depth' against India, assisted further by the ability of Pakistan to draw on both China and the USA against India. In addition, there have been allegations that Indian armed forces are suffering from waste and corruption and are under-equipped compared even with Pakistan. In consequence, modest increases in defence spending have a limited impact on India's power projection capabilities.⁴²

India and Pakistan are self-declared nuclear powers and their devices, with the multiplier of delivery vehicles, must also be factored into the regional military balance. China is supposed to have nearly 300 deployed nuclear weapons. While the question of deployed nuclear weapons in India is still subject to speculation, India is estimated to have the capacity for building between 25 and 100 warheads,⁴³ and Pakistan to have enough fissile material to produce between 10 and 15 'devices', although recent reports suggest that Pakistan holds the larger inventory.⁴⁴ It remains unclear how many weapons are deployed at a given time, but one can safely assume that both have at least a few devices and could produce many more on fairly short notice. China is believed by some Indian analysts to have several nuclear weapons deployed in bases in Tibet. As for delivery, aircraft remains the main mode, but Pakistan is assumed to be moving towards a missile-based capability. Some experts assert that India lags Pakistan in this category, with only a few short-range missiles (the Prithvi) in its inventory, and a medium-range missile (the Agni). China has a few intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), nearly 70 medium-range missiles, and a dozen sea-launched ones (India has neither an ICBM nor a sea-launch capability, although programmes of both are under way). Most of these Chinese systems could theoretically target major Indian cities or Indian nuclear weapons based in northern and eastern India.⁴⁵

In terms of naval power, India's fleet is smaller than China's, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it is better trained and more experienced. Indian ships range throughout the Indian Ocean, paying regular calls on ports in East Africa and South-East Asia. Although in terms of quantity, the Indian navy is shrinking, since many obsolete vessels are being retired- and although a new carrier may be out of (financial) reach for the Indian navy- the quality of the Indian warships is gradually improving through the acquisition of Russian *Kashin-class* destroyers or Russian *Granit* Submarine-Launched Cruise Missiles (SLCMs) for their Kilo-Class submarines. So the Indian navy may

currently not be able to conduct sustained operations far from base (for example in the South China Sea), but it is definitely well positioned to defend India's interests in the Bay of Bengal and in the Arabian Sea. India's capacity to deploy a substantial air-sea operation within 48 hours of the tsunami catastrophe demonstrates this point.

In terms of gross indicators of the size of the population and the economy, India is among the leading states in the world. About the number of inhabitants, India has the world's second largest population, having passed the billion mark, and on current trends could surpass China in the next few decades. India is far ahead of the United States (270 million), and other points of reference like Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, Brazil, and Nigeria, all of which are home to between 100 million and 250 million people. India's economy is gigantic in terms of overall GNP and, along with China, is well placed to become one of the major economic powers soon. When measured by *purchasing power parity* (PPP), considering local rates of exchange, India scores higher with US\$1,661 billion, the fourth largest in the world. Since international politics recognizes states as the main actors, these figures should rank India among the leading 'powers' of the world. But from the point of view of relative power, they are misleading, for the transformation of GNP to power must consider the ability of an actor to mobilize the economy to a war economy, and for the population to be able to sustain a war over an indefinite period. Seen in this light, the impact of India's size is modest on her relative power position because of the poor performance on the per capita indicator. India ranks low in terms of GNP per capita, with a figure of only US\$430, far below China's US\$750. On social indicators, the picture is just as dismal, for India does rather badly on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Cohen 2001).⁴⁶

India's ambiguous profile results from the hiatus between self-perception and evaluation by others. Perception based on the nostalgia for the *Hindi Chini bhai bhai* days, where there was a semblance of equality between the two neighbours, is widely out of touch with the reality on the ground. Parity with China will require the deployment of resources at a scale that India does not possess. Besides, India's engagement with South Asia keeps her troops tied down to the region. Consequently, in terms of translating force potential into actual power, India faces a considerable degree of slippage. This uncertainty about the real power at the disposal of India causes the country to shuttle uneasily between grandstanding on the one hand, and inexplicable acquiescence in situations that are contrary to her interests or declared principles on the other, lowering her credibility even further.

Popular perception of the foreign policy goals of a country and the depth of support for them are important components of the political resources that the country can draw on. An analysis of data on popular perception of the nuclear programme gives some credence to Cohen's contention that the Indian nuclear programme is 'without clear purpose or direction' (Cohen 2001).⁴⁷ Three factors, namely, the cohesive nature of public opinion about national security commitments and priorities, the clarity of a national security doctrine and the actual possession of the resources to wage war, constitute the variables in the perception of national power. As the following information about public perception and attitudes shows, India's exact rank as a power remains uncertain. Indian public opinion supports the bomb, but not for warlike purposes (Tables 8.3 and 8.4). India is engaged in the production of weapons and missiles, but unlike other countries similarly engaged, there are no plans for, or policies about, sale or diffusion of such technology.⁴⁸

Table 8.3 Public opinion on state-to-state relations

	<i>Now I will read the names of some countries. Have you heard the name of these countries?</i>		<i>(If yes) How is their relationship with India—Friend, neither friend nor enemy or enemy?</i>		
	Yes	No	Friend	Neither	Enemy
Nepal	65.3	34.7	41.3	16.8	1.7
America	70.3	29.7	27.1	25.9	11.1
Pakistan	82.9	17.1	6.9	7.4	64.2
Bangladesh	65.5	34.5	32.5	21.4	5.7
China	64.3	35.7	21.7	23.4	13.0
Sri Lanka	66.5	33.5	36.1	21.0	3.3
Russia	61.9	38.1	42.1	12.7	1.4

Source: Post-poll Survey of the Indian Electorate, CSDS (Delhi) 1999.

Table 8.4 Public opinion on security issues

Q: Now I will talk about some specific issues on which different people have different opinions. I will read out some statements to which you may agree or disagree.

Statements	1999			2009			
	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Agree	Somewhat Agree/Disagree	No Opinion	Disagree
India should make efforts to develop friendly relations with Pakistan							
Do you...	42.4	33.9	23.7				
Country should increase spending on army even if it increases the burden on ordinary people							
Do you...	50.1	32.6	17.3	23.9	33.5	27.3	15.3
War is the only solution to Indo-Pakistan problem							
Do you...	25.2	35.6	39.1	16.6	25.6	26.6	31.2

Data Source: Post-poll Survey of the Indian Electorate, NES; CSDS (Delhi) 1999 and 2009.

India's active media and contentious democracy provide effective conditions for an influential role for Indian public opinion in the formulation and implementation of strategic decisions. The data reported in Table 8.3 show that Indian security and foreign policy are both firmly in the realm of national political consciousness, a fact that no government in politically contentious India can afford to ignore. But, while the Indian public appears to be conscious of the problem of security, what do they really want from their government?

The data reported in Table 8.3, possibly reflecting the effects of Kargil, show a public that is agitated but indecisive, whereas Table 8.4 shows the perception of Pakistan as

India's 'public enemy number one', although, regarding the right course of action to follow, the Indian public is surprisingly conciliatory. Significantly, many more people agree that 'India should make efforts to develop friendly relations with Pakistan' than disagree (Mitra and Singh 2009: 115). On the general issue of 'war as the only solution to the Indo-Pakistan problem', the number of those who disagree far exceeds those who agree (while a substantial number express no opinion), but these conciliatory and peace-like opinions are contradicted by the significant support for 'increased spending on the army even if it increases the burden on ordinary people'.

When compared to the findings from 2004, the opinion data from 2009 shows small but significant changes on some key issues. Thus, on nuclearisation, the percentage of people saying that the 'country should increase spending on the army even if it increases the burden on ordinary people' has come down from 50.1 percent to 41.8 percent, while those opposed to this line of thinking has gone up from 17.3 percent to 30.9 percent. On Indo-Pak relations, while a quarter of the national sample thought war as the only solution, that group has registered a small increase to 28.5 percent, and those opposed to this idea have increased from 39 percent to about 45 percent. Most noticeable is the fact that opinion is more polarised about Pakistan; for the undecided have come down from 35.6 percent to 26.6 percent.⁴⁹

The foreign policy of the Modi government has built on the above issue areas. Five core elements emerge and which are entangled with each another. These are: enhancing the Asian profile of India without necessarily courting hostility with China; reaching out to the Indian Ocean; cultivating 'friendship without alliance' with the United States; developing a cohesive West Asian strategy, and linking up with the Indian diaspora. The first of these is the 'Act East Policy'. The government is keen that India would focus more and more on improving relations with South East and other East Asian countries. It has shown great political dexterity in taking on a policy which was formulated during the Congress Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's government in 1992. Aimed primarily at better economic engagement with its eastern neighbours, and complementary to the 'Neighbourhood first' policy, the initiative is meant to project India's Asian profile, and send a mixed signal to China, offering trade and cooperation but from the standpoint of an equal partner. The Modi government faces up to the fact that friendship with China must be strong enough to withstand rivalry. The initiatives to pitch for a leading role in the Indian Ocean arena for better trade, connectivity, governance and security of sea lanes has increasingly emerged as the Indian response to the Chinese project of Maritime Silk Road (commonly referred to as 'One Belt One Road') which aims at connecting China to markets in Europe, Central Asia, South and South East Asia. In its efforts to extend India's sphere of influence into India's 'nautical backyard' the Modi administration have introduced Project Mausam.⁵⁰ Prime Minister Modi has undertaken a three-nations *Yatra* (travel) to Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka, to reinforce the linkages. Cooperation with the Pacific Islands is yet another strand in this strategy to develop a broad, cohesive, project to strengthen India's linkage to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

With regards the USA, the Modi government has built on past achievements in gaining support from the United States for India's civil nuclear programme. In an effort to get past irritants like the denial of a US visa, Modi has reached out to the United States. Successful visits to the US and several key Western States, the mobilisation of corporate interest in those countries and personal linkage with key leaders has helped communicate the new business-friendly, democratic profile of India to the leaders of those countries. And yet, the government has taken extra precaution not to let this proximity

be profiled as India's becoming a partner in an anti-China coalition. India has refrained from making any specific remarks on China's attempt to strengthen its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and has only emphasised the general principle of freedom of navigation which, naturally, also applies to the Indian Ocean and world-wide.

The Indian reference to 'West Asia' in preference to the 'Middle East' builds on a form of Asian solidarity and makes it possible for India to have close relations with countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel which have their own difficulties. This facilitates India's access to the oil fields, job markets for Indian workers whose remittances are a major component of India's growing reserves of foreign currency, and sends a signal to India's Muslim minority that the government is not necessarily opposed to any religion. The government has acted promptly to evacuate Indian and other foreign nationals at times of danger, and taken a principled stand against the ISIS in the name of its fight against terrorism, without references to Islam as such, thus preventing its own position from being part of war on Islam.

Finally, by reaching out to the Indian diaspora, present world-wide, concerted efforts have been made to build on its political support for enhancing trade, cultural linkage, and political influence in the countries where they are located. Once again, the Modi government is drawing on past achievements, the difference being addition of a personal touch that the Prime Minister gives to these occasions.

India has seen great proclivity to engage in multi-lateral bodies. As one of leading developing countries, India has taken an active role in important multilateral forums for global governance such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G20 leaders' summit, East Asia Summit, BRICS summit of emerging economies, and the Commonwealth of Nations as well as the SAARC. Apart from these global platforms India also engaged in many regional groupings like the BASIC, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Indian Ocean Rim Association, IBSA Dialogue Forum, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation and BIMSTEC, among others.

Conclusion: continuity and change in Indian foreign policy

Indian diplomacy today presents a sharp contrast in its tone and content to its previous form. The shrill 'third world' rhetoric of earlier years has now been replaced by a new pragmatism. India's foreign policy in the twenty-first-century is nuclear, internationally engaged, and non-aligned, all at the same time. Rather than standing alone on issues that affect both long-held principles and material interests of the country, India now acts multilaterally. The country now refrains from direct interference or engagement with conflict—in the South Asian neighbourhood, or beyond—while still making it clear that it stood by democracy and respect for national sovereignty. Furthermore, the approach to international relations has become more complex, capable of conducting diplomatic business in spite of existing conflicts, as is apparent in the case of flourishing Indo-Chinese trade despite differences over territory, the Chinese reservations about the Indo-US Nuclear Framework Agreement, the Chinese wariness about the potential for India to act as a pivot between the United States and them, and India's growing nuclear arsenal. And finally, within the general norms of the five principles of co-existence, Indian diplomats have been busy negotiating the terms of trade in international organizations such as the WTO, often making alliances with like-minded countries. However, the seemingly anti-western rhetoric that sometimes characterizes these occasions has not affected the support that India has received from the United States in difficult negotiations with the IAEA, or with the NSG.

The shift in India's foreign policy stance has been seamless rather than abrupt. There is a line of continuous evolution from Nehru to Modi. Successive generations of leaders have added their innate ideas and perceptions of national interest to the cumulating fund of Indian diplomacy. The main framework of non-alignment has remained, but the contents have been reshuffled, repacked, enriched, and occasionally jettisoned by Nehru's successors. Their strategic moves have been influenced by the simultaneous consideration of their perception of choices open to them in the international arena and the advantages that the given choice could deliver in domestic politics. Just as the decision of Indira Gandhi to intervene in Pakistan's internal conflict in 1971—at the risk of international opprobrium, particularly from the United States and its allies—generated great enthusiasm within India, so did the move of Atal Behari Vajpayee to authorize nuclear tests and the subsequent bus diplomacy with Pakistan. The alacrity with which the UPA government pursued the nuclear deal, and attempted to balance the sentiments of articulate Hindu opinion in Jammu with the interests of the Kashmir valley in direct trade with Pakistan across the LoC, indicated the continuation of engagement and affirmation of national interest initiated by the NDA, its predecessor. The Modi concept of 'friendship with all and alliance with none' is a reinforcement and continuation of these long-term goals of Indian foreign policy rather than a radical departure from them.

Two significant aspects of recent developments in Indian foreign policy should be mentioned here. In the first place, one should remember that three key elements—liberalization of the economy and a consequent integration with the world economy, nuclearisation, and engagement with Pakistan and China in negotiation—have become enduring features of Indian diplomacy. Secondly, there is a strong bi-partisan consensus around these initiatives. Once in power, Hindu nationalists took the initiative for the bus diplomacy with Pakistan and invited General Musharraf—for many, the main architect of the failure of Lahore and the betrayal of Kargil—for a dialogue with India. Modi's India has come back to the 'firm India' policy of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, but keeping the door ajar for dialogue, all the same.

Once one gets past the familiar litany, one finds a fine balance of national self-interest and idealism in contemporary Indian foreign policy. The idea of Afro-Asian solidarity is pragmatically adapted to the imperatives of our times. The commitment to justice and solidarity is tempered with the imperative of change. The difference in tone and content of the new *Panchsheel* from the old is remarkable. Whereas its invocation during the earlier phases started, continued, and ended with idealistic evocations of Afro-Asian solidarity and abstract goals of peace, an instrumental approach to abstract goals triumphs in the current form. The declaration on a new Asian African Strategic Partnership outlines guiding principles for joint action to 'achieve our goals in a changed global environment'. India has come up with a series of specific measures that should be at the top of the international agenda. These measures include the demands to phase out trade-distorting agricultural subsidies in developed countries and to remove barriers to agricultural exports from developing countries; lowering of tariff barriers to other exports; to balance the protection of the environment with the development aspirations of the developing nations; urgent measures to generate additional financial resources for development, especially for the least developed countries and the highly indebted poor countries. India has effectively couched the country's long-standing goal of a permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations with the right to veto under the rhetoric of the 'democratization' of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

India's foreign policy during the last phase of the UPA reflected the conflict of national and regional politics. Indian policy towards Sri Lanka was strongly affected by the need on the part of the UPA government to cater to the pro-Tamil rhetoric of the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu and a member of the UPA—the positions taken by the state have also become the subject of national debate in the Indian media. Some analysts have explained India's loss of influence in South Asia due to the constraints of coalition politics, where the imperative to cater to the domestic needs of coalition partners can push national policy towards partisan ends, and in some cases, resulted in contradictions and policy paralysis. With the single majority status that the BJP enjoys in the Lok Sabha, in foreign policy which has always been the executive prerogative of the Union government, the government of Mr Modi has more room to manoeuvre in external relations and is using this opportunity to great effect.

For the past two years, in terms of our tool-box one can see how, and why, the foreign policy of the new government got the support of the key constituencies abroad, without eliciting opposition from any major stakeholders at home. As the States of the Indian Union such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana—those regions which are connected to the diaspora, and host a strong presence of the corporate sector—are also the key support base of the BJP. As such, this foreign policy has not yet mobilised major opposition to it. However, if the Modi promise of generating millions of jobs at home—thanks to contacts abroad—does not become a reality, one can anticipate the emergence of opposition to foreign policy in the guise of an anti-corporate sector alliance.

Thanks to a combination of high economic growth, steady integration into an international market economy, the emergence of globally competitive multinationals and, a vast enhancement of defence capacities, the international status of India has radically altered over the past decade. At home, India's leaders increasingly speak of their country as a global player, even while recognising the constraints of being a low-income country with poor infrastructure and mass poverty. India's policy makers have long nurtured an internationalist ambition, evident in the role that India played as a founding member in major post-war international institutions such as GATT, subsequently the WTO, as an active participant within the United Nations, becoming a major contributor to the UN's Peace Keeping Forces and leader of the Non-Alignment movement. However, this did not translate into India taking a leadership position within the region of South Asia. As India continues to seek greater influence especially in international negotiations to secure its interests in the realms of climate, trade, agriculture, energy, membership of multi-lateral organisations gains added significance. Recent Indian policy towards South Asian countries suggests there has been a revival in regionalist initiatives but that ambivalence—between going alone or skipping over the region to reach out to extra-regional linkages—colour India's diplomatic relations.

The regime change in India following the parliamentary elections of May 2014 has quickened the pace of these developments. With Mr Narendra Modi at the head of the government, India's foreign policy has gained a new look.⁵¹ Five major changes—the centrality given to economic and technological development, the orientation of domestic and foreign policies towards this objective, the emphasis on national power including military power, stress on soft power, and a reduction in self-imposed constraints on actions that other countries may construe as inimical to their interests, have

been reported in the press.⁵² The tit-for-tat strategy against Pakistan in contrast to the hesitant approach of the predecessors appears to be firmly in its place.⁵³ Over the past months, the Prime Minister, the ministers of foreign affairs and defence and other stakeholders jointly responsible for defining the trajectory of India's foreign policy have undertaken strategic visits abroad and come up with major statements about policy.

There was a sense of wariness among India's neighbouring countries at the triumph of the Hindu nationalist BJP in the 2014 parliamentary elections. However, once in office, the NDA coalition has firmly moved into the making of foreign policy with a certain vision of shared prosperity, security and stable peace with the neighbours. Mr Modi took them by surprise when he invited all the heads of South Asian states to his swearing-in, and benefited from the occasion for direct, face-to-face conversation with them. Without any prior experience of foreign policy making, or for that matter, politics at the Union level, Narendra Modi has shown a certain flair for making personal contacts with leaders of countries that do not necessarily see eye-to-eye with one another. Leading emergent India, Modi has adroitly reformulated non-alignment as 'friendship with all and alliance with none', or, depending on the audience as *sabka saath, sab ka vikash* (Hindi, for friendship with all, welfare of all). Unlike Nehru whose policy derived from an idealised image of global governance, Modi's stance is pragmatic. Nehru's model of development through import substitution had little need for foreign direct investment or connectivity with the Indian diaspora. Modi's strategy of foreign relations builds on both. If this synergy of domestic economic growth and a supportive foreign policy, finds a political resonance in India by the way of electoral support for the new profile of India's foreign policy, one can expect Indian foreign policy to stay the course and gain momentum. The long-term stability of this course will however, be contingent on a double-pronged approach of normalising India's relations with Pakistan and China and a strategic balancing of China and the United States.

Notes

- 1 Narendra Modi, 'India has begun to get its "due" on world stage: PM Narendra Modi', Indian Express, 7 November 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics>.
- 2 'India now aspires to be a leading power, rather than just a balancing power', and carries with it 'a willingness to shoulder greater global responsibilities'. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (2015). S. Jaishankar, 'India, the United States and China', IISS-Fullerton Lecture, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 20 July 2015, www.iiss.org.
- 3 "India will work with countries in the region and beyond, including the United States and Russia, to ensure that our commons—ocean, space and cyber—remain avenues of shared prosperity, not become new theatres of contests... India will lend its strength to keep the seas safe, secure and free for the benefit of all...Nations must cooperate more with each other. Societies must reach out within and to each other. We must delink terrorism from religion, and assert the human values that define every faith". Narendra Modi (2015)
- 4 See the statement of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as an example of the combination of third world-ism and moral high ground that gave Indian foreign policy its diffused and uncertain character.

At the global level, we must devise instrumentalities to deal with imbalances built into the functioning of the international political and economic order. We should aim to expand the constituency that supports the process of globalization.... To meet these challenges and constraints, we must respond in a manner worthy of the Bandung spirit. Just as that historic meeting redefined the agenda for its time, we must do so once again here today.

Manmohan Singh's Bandung Address, commemorating the
50th anniversary of the Non-aligned Conference, 2004

- 5 If a doctrine is understood in terms of a cohesive construct that reduces uncertainty by pulling together clear objectives, an institutional mechanism for implementation and the capacity to match action to policy, then India's 'doctrine of minimum nuclear deterrence' is an epitome of ambiguity. Key statements such as 'India will not be the first to initiate a nuclear strike, but will respond with punitive retaliation should deterrence fail' are capable of diverse interpretation. See 'Draft record of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine', www.indianembassy.org/policy/CTBT/NuclearDoctrine_aug_17, accessed on 1 June 2005.
- 6 In a remarkable demonstration of its commitment to the Indo-US Nuclear Framework Agreement, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government of India risked its very survival in the trust vote of 2008 where the communist allies of the ruling coalition withdrew their support. The government survived the trust vote by recruiting other allies to replace the communists.
- 7 The UPA government is committed to maintaining a credible nuclear weapons programme while at the same time it will evolve demonstrable and verifiable confidence-building measures with its nuclear neighbours. It will take a leadership role in promoting universal, nuclear disarmament and working for a nuclear weapons-free world. UPA's Common Minimum Programme; see Internet source. https://books.google.com.sg/books?id=yInZdHn-pKoC&pg=PA104&lpg=PA104&dq=The+UPA+government+is+committed+to+mainaining+a+credible+nuclear+weapons+programme+while+at+the+same+time+it+will+evolve+demonstrable+and+verifiable+confidence+building+measures+with+its+nuclear+neighbours.+It+will+take+a+leadership+role+in+promoting+universal+nuclear+disarmament+and+working+for+a+nuclear+weapons-free+world.+UPA%E2%80%99s+Common+Minimum+Programme;&source=bl&ots=Z0iffbqs6&sig=T_nBTGB5yz8TUxHt71C3XZ-mdc8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjhjques56jVAhWIkpQKHfpUCV8Q6AEIJDA#v=onepage&q=The%20UPA%20government%20is%20committed%20to%20maintaining%20a%20credible%20nuclear%20weapons%20programme%20while%20at%20the%20same%20time%20it%20will%20evolve%20demonstrable%20and%20verifiable%20confidence-building%20measures%20with%20its%20nuclear%20neighbours.%20It%20will%20take%20a%20leadership%20role%20in%20promoting%20universal%2C%20nuclear%20disarmament%20and%20working%20for%20a%20nuclear%20weapons-free%20world.%20UPA%E2%80%99s%20Common%20Minimum%20Programme%3B&f=false. Visited on 27 July 2017.

The NDA government has retained the nuclear stance of its predecessor.

- 8 Incredible as it might sound, a month after the attack on Mumbai by terrorists who are suspected of having been trained in Pakistan, it was India which was being called upon to be restrained in her reaction! Despite circumstantial evidence indicating a link between the terrorists and the Pakistani army, Pakistan, with the support of China, has manoeuvred to get India to assure a world weary of war between the nuclear-powered neighbours of its peaceful intentions. Buoyed by the entry of traditional ally China in the role of the peacemaker in the region and feeling "vindicated" by the toned down Indian statements, Pakistan proposed on Tuesday that New Delhi should send it "positive signals" by deactivating its forward air bases and relocating troops to "peace time" positions. The best that Indian embassy officials have managed by the way of response to this demarche on the part of Pakistan is to issue a statement: "We have been asked to undo what we have not done". ('Relocate troops to "peace time" positions: Pakistan' in *The Hindu*, 31 December 2008).
- 9 The statement by Prime Minister Vajpayee, that 'the tests ... provided a valuable database for the design of nuclear weapons and of different yields for different applications and different delivery systems', went beyond the ad hoc extemporizing of Indira Gandhi in front of the world media about peaceful uses of nuclear power. This was a step in the direction of greater clarity but was still short of the standards set by the nuclear establishment as it failed to nail it to some visible target.
- 10 The agreement reached by Prime Ministers Modi and Sharif at Ufa to continue a dialogue between the two countries was brought to an abrupt end subsequently. See, Subrata Mitra, 'After Ufa: Why the India-Pakistan Dialogue needs to be reconceptualised on the lines of 'Principled Negotiations', *ISAS Working Paper*, No. 209, Institute of South Asian Studies (NUS, Singapore), 27 September 2015. Similarly, the surprise visit of Mr Modi to Lahore, putatively to join Prime Minister Sharif in his birthday celebrations but was

intended to relaunch the dialogue between the two countries appeared on the verge of collapse, following the subsequent terrorist attack on India's Pathankot airbase, originating from Pakistani soil. See *The Hindu*, Dec 25, 2015, (New Delhi) for an evocative picture of Prime Minister Modi with Prime Minister Nawab Sharif walking companionably.

- 11 The Economist Intelligence Unit's country report on India sums up the situation as follows:

A long-standing dispute between India and China over the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh flared up once again in March [2008]. The dispute has been festering since the war between the two countries in 1962. Both sides agreed in 1993 to maintain peace along the McMahon Line (the existing Line of Control) regardless of their divergent views regarding the sovereignty over the territory. The 1,030-km unfenced border is separated by the McMahon Line which China has not recognised since it was determined during the British Colonial rule in 1914. China claims 90,000 sq km of the territory—that is, nearly all of Arunachal Pradesh.

Monthly Report, April 2008, p. 10

- 12 The tool box draws upon the two dominant modes of thinking in international politics, namely, (Neo-) Realism and (Neo-) Liberalism (many going back to Kantian notion of perpetual peace) as well as constructivism which seeks to bridge the chasm between the former two. It suggests 'that the structures of human associations are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and, that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.' Wendt (1999), p. 1. See also Mitra and Schoettli (2007).
- 13 Notice, for example, the tremendous costs of the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka, apparently, in the end, to no avail, and the utter silence of the Indian regime on the ruthless suppression of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that ended the bloody civil war.
- 14 One account of the cost of inimical relations between India and Pakistan and potential benefits of cooperation between the two neighbours estimates 'a gain of US\$200 billion to Pakistan's GDP, increasing it from US\$375 billion in 2007 to US\$571 billion a year. This translates into an increase of US\$850 per capita by 2025. India's GDP could increase by US\$1.5 trillion and its GDP per capita by US\$1,140.' Shahid Javed Burki, *South Asia in the New World Order: the Role of Regional Cooperation* (London: Routledge; 2011), p. 175.
- 15 By recent indications, particularly, the multiple trips of Prime Minister Modi to the centres of power, and the reciprocation of some of these visits by major leaders of the world to India, it might be argued that the direction of India's foreign policy has taken a radical turn. The two figures most closely identified with emerging India—Prime Minister Modi and Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar—showcase a different profile of India. 'A stage has come where no country can now think of treating India with contempt or condescension. Every country today is looking at us either with deference or as an equal.' (Narendra Modi <http://indian-express.com/article/india/politics/2014>). Jaishankar adds: 'India now aspires to be a leading power, rather than just a balancing power', and carries with it 'a willingness to shoulder greater global responsibilities'. (Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, 20 July 2015, www.iiss.org) This is currently one of the core issues of the analysis of emerging trends in Indian foreign policy.
- 16 See 'Appraising the legacy of Bandung', See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya, eds., *Bandung Revisited* (NUS Press, 2008), pp. 161–179.
- 17 See Cohen (2001), pp. 47.
- 18 See Mansingh (1984).
- 19 See Jivanta Schoettli (2011), chapter three for the evolution of Nehru's worldview.
- 20 See Neville Maxwell (1970) on India's 'forward policy', pp. 173–74; 232.
- 21 One estimate puts them as follows. The Indian army suffered the following casualties: 1,383 killed, 1,047 wounded, 1,696 missing, 3,968 jawans captured. The Chinese PLA (People's Liberation Army) suffered the following casualties: 722 killed, 1,697 wounded. (Source: historyguy.com). Sighted on Jan 12, 2016.
- 22 *The Economist*. "China and India: Clash of The Titans". 2016. Web. 19 May 2017.
- 23 Srivastava (1995), the secretary to Shastri who was with him in Tashkent and followed events closely, provides valuable insights into the thinking of Shastri.
- 24 See Srivastava's biography of Shastri for details of the Indian perception of the unfolding scenario. See Srivastava (1995).

25 See P N Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the 'Emergency', and Indian Democracy* (Delhi: OUP; 2000).

26 Nugent (1990), p. 116.

27 'Kargil ... was emblematic of a malaise in India–Pakistan relations that threatens, in the absence of serious and concerned efforts to put these relations on a more productive footing, to darken their passage well into the twenty-first-century' (Wirsing 2003: 39).

[T]he most important lesson of the two-month crisis ensues from the disastrous consequences of unstructured governance. The Kargil affair has exposed systematic flaws in a decision-making process that is impulsive, chaotic, erratic and overly secretive ... playing holy warriors this week and men of peace the next betrays an infirmity and insincerity of purpose that leaves the country leaderless and directionless.

'Anatomy of a debacle', *Newsline*, July 1999

28 In fact, the constitution of India mandates cooperation with international bodies, including the United Nations. See Constitution of India, Article 51.

29 Cohen (2001), p. 58.

30 *Ibid*, p. 56.

31 In early March [2008] Mr Mukherjee [India's foreign minister] said that China's claim was illegal and made clear that Arunachal Pradesh was 'an integral part of India'. Mr Mukherjee's comments followed Mr Singh's first visit to the mountainous State, during which he called Arunachal Pradesh 'our land of the rising sun', much to the annoyance of the Chinese. China has consistently refused to issue visas to Indian passport holders hailing from Arunachal Pradesh, arguing that they do not need such documentation to visit 'their own country'. India has been alarmed by what the army chief of staff, General Deepak Kapoor, has called a 'tremendous' build-up of infrastructure on the Chinese side in the past few years. The Indian government has vowed to speed up the development of the State.

Economist Intelligence Unit Monthly Report,
April 2008, p. 10

32 The EIU reports wryly,

Both countries know that the cost of war over the territory would be prohibitively high (the state's GDP is less than 2 percent the value of India–Chinese bilateral trade) and would derail the process of closer bilateral economic integration and co-operation—unlike in decades past, when such a process was ore or less non-existent. But long-running negotiations on Arunachal Pradesh have yielded no real progress that would reflect these improved bilateral ties and new economic realities.

Economist Intelligence Unit Monthly Report,
April 2008, p. 10

33 The Look East Policy is a generic name for a cluster of initiatives undertaken by the Government of India to strengthen Indian interests in South-East and East Asia.

34 Kashmir has long been the main bone of contention between India and Pakistan. Three wars—including the Indo-Pakistani Wars of 1947 and 1965, and the Kargil War of 1999—and numerous border skirmishes later, the situation in the Kashmir valley today remains unstable with competing claims of ownership over its territory. In terms of the ground reality, two-fifths of Kashmir are under Pakistan's control, of which Pakistan has transferred control of the Gilgit-Baltistan region in the Sino-Pak Agreement (1963) to China for the building of the Karakoram highway. See Mitra and Carciomaru (2015).

35 Roy-Chaudhury (1998), pp. 19–27.

36 The Nathula trading post, for example, which was closed following the war in 1962, was opened again in 2006.

37 Neither the five recognized nuclear weapon states, nor the signatory states of the NPT and CTBT and the members of the IAEA formally recognize India's and Pakistan's nuclear status. However, at the informal level, the major actors, above all the US administration, follow a rather pragmatic policy by engaging India in tacit negotiations and increasingly intense cooperation on nuclear safety and restrictions on technology transfer.

38 India, as Cohen (2001) reports,

has been in the midst of a major arms buying spree. A recent purchase from Russia for more than \$4 billion worth of equipment will augment India's tank force and air fleet

considerably and permit the acquisition of several important ships, including a second aircraft carrier. This included a \$3 billion agreement to produce aircraft under license and acquire modern tanks and an aircraft carrier' (p. 31). See 'India, Russia sign \$3 billion arms deal', *Times of India*, 29 December 2000.

Also 'India, Russia ready military arms dealer', CNN.com, 4 October 2000. India has just purchased more than 1,000 man-portable radar systems from Israel and is negotiating a deal on Hawk jets with the UK.

- 39 See Cohen (2001), p. 29.
- 40 Own calculation based on Stockholm International Peace Research Institute data. See the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. <http://milexdata.sipri.org> (accessed 19 May 2010) and *CIA World Factbook* (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/) (accessed 19 May, 2010).
- 41 See Table 8.1 above.
- 42 See the scathing pre-Kargil critique by Mohan Guruswamy, 'Modernise or perish', *Indian Express*, 26 January 1998. After Kargil, he and others pointed out the considerable qualitative disadvantages held by India's larger forces when confronted with the Pakistani forces.
- 43 Tellis, in Ganguly (2001) gives estimates by various specialists.
- 44 For an analysis, confirmed in part by recently retired US officials, see Windrem and Kupperman, 'Pakistan Nukes Outstrip India's, Officials Say,' MSNBC News (2001). See also Tellis (2001: 730) 'Pakistan, though nominally weak (compared to India) is actually stronger than it is commonly perceived.'
- 45 Cohen (2001), p. 30. See Perkovich (1999) for a detailed account of the development of India's nuclear programme. For a projection of future growth of India's nuclear weapons programme, see Tellis (2001), p. 720.
- 46 See Cohen (2001) for details.
- 47 Cohen (2001), Chapter 6.
- 48 Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, one of India's leading military scientists and the 'father' of India's missile programme, had urged India to get into the business of missile sales to break up the 'monopolies' of the dominant powers and their unfair regulating mechanisms, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime.
- 49 Foreign policy has become increasingly salient as a component of domestic politics as one can notice from the fall in 'no opinion' and increasing polarization of opinions.
- 50 *Mausam* (in Hindi: मौसम means weather or season in many South and Southeast Asian languages is highlighted because of its profound role in cultural exchanges in region as in ancient time maritime trade used to depend on seasonal monsoon winds. The project which is still in the evolving phase, is being worked on with the Cultural Ministry. It will focus on the ancient trade and cultural linkages and emphasize on future maritime cooperation in the Indian ocean region stretching from Southeast Asia to East Africa with the central location of India, from where the ocean derived its name.
- 51 'In 100 days at the helm of the Union Government, Mr Modi has introduced a leitmotif, bringing style to the substance of foreign policy. Though most of the announcements made on his international visits were in continuation of those during the visits of previous Prime Ministers, it is Mr Modi's ability to re-energise them with his flourishes that distinguished his tenure.' Suhasini Haider; 'Foreign policy: Modi brings style to substance!' The Hindu.
- 52 Arvind Virmani, 'Recalibratin India's Foreign Policy', The Hindu, 29.12.2014, www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/comment. The author adds that 'Aggression along the border is being countered by bold moves like the decision to construct a McMahon highway in Arunachal Pradesh'.
- 53 Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said the Indian security forces should not hold back in the face of firing and must retaliate with 'double the force'. Underlining that the number of ceasefire violations across the LoC have reduced as compared to last year, Mr. Parrikar, however, noted that the violations have increased across the IB. Asked what has been his direction to the security forces, Parrikar, who was interacting with defence journalists last night, said, 'Our (NDA government) response is don't hesitate. React appropriately without holding yourself back'. The Hindu, Jammu/New Delhi, December 31, 2014.

9 Democracy and development in a post-colonial context

The Indian puzzle

Like Hindu conceptions of the divine, the state in India is polymorphous, a creature of manifold forms and orientations. One is the third actor whose scale and power contribute to the marginality of class politics. Another is a liberal or citizens' state, a juridical body whose legislative reach is limited by a written constitution, judicial review, and fundamental rights. Still another is a capitalist state that guards the boundaries of the mixed economy by protecting the rights and, promoting the interests of property in agriculture, commerce, and industry. Finally, a socialist state is concerned to use public power to eradicate poverty and privilege and tame private power. Which combination prevails in a particular historical setting is a matter for inquiry.

Rudolph and Rudolph *In Pursuit of Lakshmi* (1987), pp. 400–1

If we possess our *why* of life, we can put up with almost any *how*.

Nietzsche (1889), *The Twilight of the Idols*. Cited by Bernard Williams in Smart and Williams (1973), p. 77

Introduction

This chapter examines the general and comparative significance of Indian democracy. On the basis of an empirical dissection of the Indian case, the analysis undertaken here seeks to identify the set of conditions that are conducive to the growth of democracy. India's democracy is remarkable in cross-national comparison of transitional societies. States in these societies, as we learn from Huntington's systematic analysis (Huntington 1968) tend to collapse under the weight of the growing gap between increasing popular expectations and limited state capacity. In the light of the mounting evidence, the fact that democracy in India has survived, and the economy has achieved self-sustaining growth, is puzzling. Giving this achievement an exceptional character amounts to attributing an essential character to what goes by the name of 'Indian' culture.¹ That would be equivalent to the argument that Indian culture by itself constitutes the main explanation for the success of Indian democracy. Besides, that would also ignore the vast intra-India differences in the scale and pace of transition to democracy and its consolidation. As such, we have explained internal variations in the success of India's democracy in terms of a general model (Chapter 1), focused on innovative institutions, (Chapter 4) strategic reform and public policy (Chapters 6 and 8), appropriate to the historical context (Chapter 2). The introductory chapter already indicated the role that culture and context play in India's politics. However, the core assumptions of the book as a whole are drawn from general theory. A set of behavioural assumptions provide the bridge to connect the Indian case with general theories of democracy transition and consolidation.

Despite modern India's prowess in science and technology and the global reach of India's corporates, many still think of Indian attitudes in the mode of Hindu fatalism and caste hierarchy. As such, it is useful to briefly recapitulate the norms of Indian behaviour, already alluded to in Chapters 3 and 4. India's political actors, indeed, like politicians anywhere, adopt strategies that maximise their chances of reaching their goals. When their individual resources do not suffice for them to win, they build coalitions, choosing partners carefully, in order to be able to build on the combined strength of the allies, maximising their political resources such as money, status, contacts, votes, force and often as a last recourse, violence. These political entrepreneurs make strategic policy choices and strike at the most opportune moment. The epigraph from Nietzsche at the top of this chapter provides an insight into apparently inexplicable behaviour of some political actors. These assumptions about rational actors underpin the core of the explanatory model on which this study is based. These assumptions bridge areas studies and comparative politics on the one hand and conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation, on the other. The analysis below dissects the components of Indian democracy in light of general democratic theory.

The implications of India's counterfactual democracy for Lipset's general theory

Democracy and citizenship are evocative of the turning points in the history of evolution of the modern state in the West. The process connects the glory of Athenian direct democracy to the formalization of Roman law, proclamation of the dignity of man in the French Revolution, institutionalisation of universal franchise and finally, democratic citizenship based on universal human rights.² In fact, so close is the identification of Western civilization and liberal democracy that one drops the pre-fix 'Western' altogether when talking about democracy. Three problems arise out of this close identification. First, liberal democracy as a value and a form of rule are quintessential of Western civilization. In consequence, one tends to ignore the hiatus between democracy as an *ideal type* and its empirical manifestation in actual practice in the West. Secondly, that Democracy 'won' over Fascism and Marxism is attributed to its innate strength, not to the local opportunity structure, contingent on global political conditions. Democratisation of the one-size-fits-all variety thus acquires the force of teleology, with the potential to spread globally with its western design essentially unaltered.

India at Independence in 1947, emerging out of British colonial rule, was a poor, socially and spatially fragmented country with low literacy, still recovering from memories of vicious Hindu-Muslim riots that marked Partition and the formation of the new Republic. An overwhelmingly large percentage of its population—illiterate, poor and steeped in subsistence agriculture—was suddenly catapulted to the world of modern competitive politics. Still, the country made a successful transition to democracy and went on to consolidate it, despite the absence of the requisite social and economic conditions at the outset. This makes India stand out as an exception to the rule. The detailed empirical analysis of the features of India's democratic political system and process in Chapter 6 establishes the reality of Indian democracy.

On that basis, one can argue that non-Western democracy is not a misnomer. More generally, one can ask: Is democracy a quintessentially 'western' idea, exclusively applicable to western society and culture, or, do all societies carry the potential to achieve the democratic form of government, without necessarily having to imbibe western

culture and ethical values? Do the democratic variants, in their hybridized forms—Christian Democracy, Guided Democracy, People's Democracy and others—share a ‘family resemblance’,³ or are they different from one another that one should cease to describe them as democracies altogether and simply settle down for a world where each state develops a form of rule appropriate to its unique situation? On the basis of general theories of democracy, one can ask: is democratization the result of democratic culture,⁴ modernization of the economic structure or ‘political capital’?

Lipset’s “Some Social Requisites of Democracy” (APSR 1959) which occupies a canonical status in the academic literature on democratization had made a pessimistic prognosis of the chances of democracy in the non-Western world which, as he saw it, lacked the essential drivers for the transition to democratic rule. The four key variables mentioned by him are: “wealth, industrialization, urbanization and education” (Lipset 1959: 75).

Given the existence of poverty-stricken masses, low levels of education, an elongated pyramid class structure, and the “premature” triumph of the democratic left, the prognosis for the perpetuation of political democracy in Asia and Africa is bleak. The nations which have the best prospects, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, the Philippines and Turkey, tend to resemble Europe in one or more major factors, high educational level (all except Turkey), substantial and growing middle class and the retention of political legitimacy by non-leftist groups... Given the pressure for rapid industrialization and for the immediate solution of chronic problems of poverty and famine through political agencies, it is unlikely that many of the new governments of Asia and Africa will be characterized by an open party system representing basically different class positions and values

(Lipset 1959: 101–2)

In view of the regularity and fairness of India’s general elections one can argue that India’s democracy is neither sham nor idiosyncratic. Colonial India’s transition to democracy and its subsequent consolidation are not based on the democratic essence of Indian culture. Instead, they are the outcomes of general variables such as path dependency, adroit institutional arrangements, strategic policy reform, and *political capital* (defined below). As such, India’s democracy is a special case of a general model. The resultant hybrid political systems that conflate western liberal democratic forms and non-western cultures, can pave the way for democracy in its most universal meaning, namely, enfranchisement, entitlement and empowerment of the citizens, and the creation of a sense of efficacy, social justice, legitimacy and trust among them.

The book pins the Indian ‘miracle’—the simultaneous achievement of democracy and development in a post-colonial context—on strategic reform and a policy process based on elite agency, accountability, state-society linkage, individual rationality and institutional arrangements (Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). India’s federal system acts as the national equaliser of opportunities through the strategic transfer of resources, under the scrutiny of the independent Finance Commission. In addition, the constellation of forces converging in the regional context (see the epigraph from Rudolph and Rudolph to this chapter), heritage and political path dependency (Chapter 2) continue to play a residual role in making democracy and development possible. And finally, leadership—that quintessential wild card of politics anywhere—also played a significant role. Such was the case of the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and their unique blend of tradition and modernity played a decisive role in the critical junctures that

marked the evolution of Indian politics under colonial rule (Chapter 2). But, we have argued, the vision and power that marked their influence need to be understood in the context in which they played their role. The context itself was independent of the leaders and was the combination of many structural factors which we shall analyse below.

Six distinctive features of Indian democracy

In order to understand the comparative significance of Indian democracy, one needs to consider six distinctive features based on the norms, modalities and language of India's everyday life. The themes explained below correspond to specific aspects of democracy in India.

Non-linear modernity

The continuity of the past—re-used and hybridised in the form of indigenous modernity—is distinctive to India compared to China or Western democracies. The latter have experienced large-scale dislocation and discontinuity, thanks to the Marxist or the industrial Revolution, in the course of their transition from agrarian society to the modern world. India's incremental change (Chapters 2 and 3) has entailed frequent re-use of the past. The memory of mythical events—the Ram Temple of Ayodhya for example—permeates current politics. Visitors to India are often amazed at the apparent ease with which the past and the present live side by side in cities, rural towns and villages. The past in India is present not just as exotic relics of distant memory but instead, as a contender, jostling for space. What gives India's pasts their peculiar resilience?

These deeper, philosophical questions are beyond the remit of this book. Nevertheless, the chapters have indicated the continuous tension between the old and the new in many of India's modern institutions and policies and the strategic resolution of this discord in the creation of new, hybrid institutions and practices. It is in this context that one notices with amazement how far and how much India's past live on amid modern institutions and practices. These are present not necessarily as exotic rituals but as competing partners. Like all large and complex societies with a settled, continuous political process stretching over millennia, India has also developed some distinctive features and a style specific to her. The style of Indian politics—a mode of communication that politicians, legislators, senior administrators and police and army officers, and newsmen share in common—is a constant backdrop for the political system.

The unresolved normative-ontological issue of identity which drags the pre-modern past into the present makes India's modern institutions vulnerable to challenges in the name of tradition. The fortuitous departure of the Muslim League for Pakistan placed a truncated and more cohesive India under the hegemony of the National Congress but did not resolve the issue of what kind of nation India was going to be and what kind of relationship the country was going to have with the Islamic states next door. And so the past lives on.

Entanglement of the individual and community

To the eyes of the Western observer, India might still come across as a self-contained geographic landmass and a distinctive chain of entangled cultures with codes of conduct that differ radically from the Western norm and vary widely from one region to another.

Students approaching Indian society and state for the first time might find the sheer scale of movements, religious and ethnic leaders actively engaged in politics, quite baffling.⁵ The Indian Constitution recognized both the individual and the community as building blocks of the political system through the provision of enforceable individual and group rights, and appropriate institutions for their implementation and policing. Morris-Jones saw the normative basis of Indian politics in terms of the modern and the traditional, with a third *idiom*—the saintly—connecting both. Louis Dumont, who theorised the normative basis of India's society and politics in terms of *homo hierarchicus*—interpersonal relations organized along the power of the ritually superior over the inferior as in the caste system. More recent observers such as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph have acknowledged the existence of this very Indian idiom of politics in a series of highly evocative concepts such as the ‘modernity of tradition’, caste ‘associations’ and the modern state as ‘avatars of Vishnu’ (see epigraph to this chapter).⁶

Political capital, derived from efficacy, legitimacy and trust

We learn from the Indian case that *political capital*, based on people's perception of efficacy, legitimacy and trust, derived from a context of effective modern political institutions, electoral processes, strategic reform of the social and economic structure and accountability, leads to democratic governance and orderly transition in postcolonial societies. In its classic form, the main argument of social capital holds that cultural attributes such as trust, social networks and shared norms at the local level trickling up to the top of the political system, make democracy work. This is true of the historical evolution of liberal democracy in Western countries where society and institutions have gone through continuous evolution as a result of larger economic and constitutional changes. In the postcolonial context, traditional society (with castes, religions, tribes and linguistic groups which have remained relatively unchanged over centuries) was catapulted suddenly into the modern world under the aegis of modern political institutions. In this case, the political system more than the social structure became the main agent of change.⁷

India's experience contrasts with that of other countries of the subcontinent such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, which share some of India's cultural, political and historical legacies. The difficulties faced by the democratic process in these countries confirm the postulates of conventional social theory: that successful political democracy requires some preconditions of literacy and economic development,⁸ institutionalisation of political power prior to the introduction of popular participation,⁹ or a victorious bourgeoisie acting as the social base for democratic institutions.¹⁰ The Indian ‘counter example’ thus raises the main question. Why has India, despite a culture based on social hierarchy and authoritarianism, mass poverty and high illiteracy, succeeded in establishing a successful democratic political order?¹¹

Balancing national unity and regional diversity

The analysis of India's federal arrangements has shown how the state has succeeded in the simultaneous differentiation of the political and administrative landscape through the creation of new units while holding on tightly to the unity and integrity of the state as a whole. The fears of ‘Balkanization’ that marked the rise of language movements in the 1950s have not materialised. Instead, thanks to the redrawing of the boundaries of

the federal States on the lines of mother tongue, regions have become coherent cultural and political units. Consequently, regions have gained in power. The liberalization of the economy has transformed the whole of India increasingly into one economic unit, producing the kind of economic collaboration across regional frontiers that would not have been possible earlier. Simultaneously, regions have also emerged as a site of governance in their own right, thanks to the transformation of regional movements into parties in power, and the politics of coalitions that has made them partners in national government, or for that matter, the national opposition, giving legitimacy to their regional bases as political units in their own right.

Regional governments, part of the institutional appurtenance of the Indian state analysed in Chapter 5, are crucial cogs in the wheel of national governance.¹² Under the constitution, and by convention, whereas the Union is indestructible, regions are creatures of the national government.¹³ The Indian state has devised an ingenious system for enhancing the stability of the political system by rearranging the units below through the creation of new regional and sub-regional governments, substituting representative government with central or even army rule when the regional political system is unable to sustain orderly rule. Such emergency rule at the regional level is usually withdrawn when the need for the suspension of the normal functioning of parliamentary politics is no longer tenable. The legal responsibility for law and order rests primarily with the regional government, but under the watchful eye of the centre. While the State governments control the regional police, the constitution of India provides for them to be superseded by direct rule from Delhi for the failure to maintain lawful governance.

In practical terms, however, following the end of the ‘one-dominant-party system’ (1947–67) in which the Indian National Congress ruled both at the centre and in the States, States have increasingly acquired autonomy and an authentic political voice. In consequence, the maintenance of law and order has become more of a joint venture between Delhi and the federal States. Still, regional diversity rules at the heart of the legal uniformity of India’s regions, as the regions, in view of their social and political evolution, historical context, specific relations with the centre and institutional arrangement, experience the problem of governance in different ways. The regional government, more than the central authority or the local administration, is the repository of the primary constitutional responsibility for the maintenance of law and order.¹⁴ Regions are important staging posts for upwardly mobile politicians and civil servants.

Ethnicity and territoriality as competing norms of citizenship

Despite these significant achievements in democracy and development, the incomplete project of nation-building, fuelled by the search for collective identity has emerged as one of the core problems of the twenty-first-century. Deep underneath the external symbols of democracy and governance, India is haunted by the unresolved issue of national identity. The nexus between foreign-sponsored terrorist attacks and complicity of local populations raises the disturbing issue of disaffection. The presence of local networks, improvised explosives and intelligence, demonstrate significant local support for terrorism in India. In addition to the threat to the security of the state, the implication of the disenchantment of sections of the Indian population who are complicit casts doubt on the success of India’s inclusive democracy and capacity of the state to protect public order.

What might account for alienation on a scale which made this series of terrorist attacks possible and what can the state do about this? Why has the Indian model which

has, as we have previously argued, so successfully transformed colonial subjects into citizens, conspicuously failed to inculcate loyalty to the state in the case of a section of the Indian population.¹⁵ Finally, how can one interpret the fact that outside the North-East of India, the bulk of the terrorists, both foreigners and their local accomplices, who have been apprehended, are Muslims? With the conspicuous counter-example of these alienated ‘citizens’ what are the implications for a general understanding of citizenship in democratic India? These questions need to be investigated in the backdrop of the broader issue of how India has attempted to turn subjects into citizens and why this project might need to be designed afresh, considering the vastly changed circumstances of the twenty-first-century.

The linkage between terrorism and sections of disaffected citizens questions the inclusive nationalism that Jawaharlal Nehru announced in his famous oration ‘Freedom at Midnight’.¹⁶ It is not to be found in his understanding of the actual stakeholders of this new nation. The legal vision of the architects of the new Republic saw citizenship in terms of territoriality, a definition that went back to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). The hiatus between the moral definition of Indians in terms of their ethnic origin and the legal definition in terms of territory was first challenged in the language riots of the 1950s that led to the redrawing of India’s internal boundaries.¹⁷

The legal right to citizenship or, more precisely, nationality is accorded by the state. Identity, and following from it, the moral right to belong, sustains individuals’ claims to citizenship. When both the legal right to citizenship and the obligations that are germane to it converge in the same group of individuals, the result is a sense of legitimate citizenship where the individual feels both legally entitled and morally engaged. If not, the consequences are either legal citizenship devoid of a sense of identification with the soil, or a primordial identification with the land but no legal sanction of this. These situations can lead to violent disorder, inter-community riots and civil war. The Indian strategy of turning subjects into citizens is based on an institutional arrangement containing several important parameters. First of these are the legal sources of citizenship as formulated in the Indian constitution (Articles 5–11), the Constituent Assembly debates (which provide insights into the controversy surrounding specific articles), and legislation undertaken by the national parliament to enable and amend, depending on the case, the original provisions of the constitution. ‘Judicialisation’ of citizenship is yet another method of synchronising the provisions of the law and the new demands emerging from society.¹⁸ The assertion of identity and linkage to India has emerged as a supplementary basis of Indian citizenship, in addition to birth and residence. Property and citizenship have constantly been interwoven; who can own property and how much have had fluid answers. In the case of Kashmir, the laws have always had a slightly different tinge due to the special agreement that Indian acts would not normally be applicable in Kashmir.¹⁹ The typical strategy makes a three-prong attack on conflict issuing out of the hiatus between general legal norms of the state and the assertion of political identity contesting the State. India makes stakeholders out of rebels by adroitly combining reform, repression and selective recruitment of rebels into the privileged circle of new elites (see Figure 9.1).

Why has India been more successful than many post-colonial states in turning subjects into citizens? The explanatory model specified in Figure 9.1 is sustained on the basis of five empirical arguments that draw on (a) India’s institutional arrangement (the constitution), (b) laws meant to implement the social visions underlying the constitution, (c) the double role of the state—as neutral enforcer and as a partisan supporting

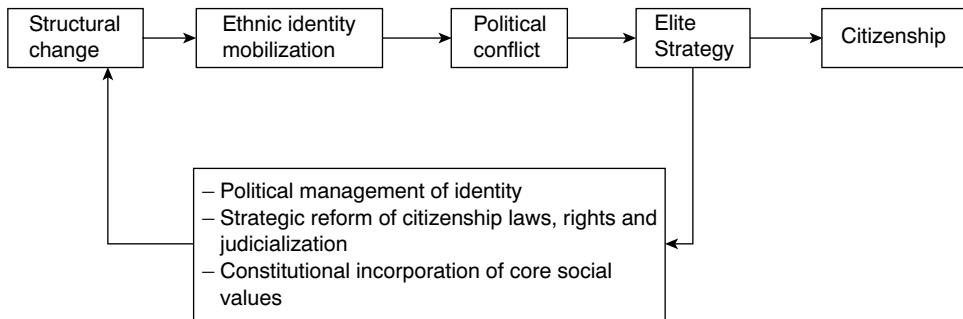


Figure 9.1 Turning subjects into citizens: a dynamic neo-institutional model.

Source: Author's Own.

vulnerable social groups—in producing a level playing field, (d) the incorporation of elements of political bargaining into Indian law and political practice, and, finally, (e) Judicialisation—evidence of the courts at work in turning subjects into citizens. India's relative success on the issue of citizenship can be attributed to the fact that these tools of citizen-making are used with unusual vigour and imagination by the political decision-makers in India. These are the factors that one must consider in order to understand the root cause of disaffection—namely, a sense of legitimacy deficit in some sections of Indian society.

We have seen some of the concrete and specific aspects of the global issue of citizenship in our analysis of India. The Indian constitution accepts and recognizes citizenship by birth, descent and naturalization. The question of 'Who is an Indian?' nevertheless is a complex one. It is further complicated by the rapid internationalization of both territory and individual identity. In consequence, citizenship has evolved from a political right by which a state identifies the people it governs to a benchmark of identity, and in today's global context, one of the many identities the individual seeks to assert for him- or herself. In the political space of India, it is possible today for communities to form and dissolve in order to re-emerge as part of other communities. Seen from a distance and over time, political transaction has taken manifold forms, ranging between voting and lobbying to protest movements and, ultimately, violent conflict. These in turn have produced knowledge of what leads to violence, instilling greater understanding and accommodation of cultural and religious differences. Castes, religious communities and ethnic groups are all impregnated by the spirit of transaction and coalition building. The result is a significant empowerment of minorities.²⁰

Historical contingency

Context matters. It is in each context that strategic leaders engage in the social construction of time, casting the pre-modern past in a new cultural space and devise the strategic room to manoeuvre. The conditions in which they make their fateful decisions are themselves the results of similar contingencies in a previous historical period. Independence came to India not because of a revolutionary war but through protracted negotiation between the colonial ruler and the main actors in the Freedom Movement. The process of negotiation was complex because the discussions between the colonizer

and the colonized intersected with conflicts among the colonized themselves. This had one major consequence. The post-Independence regime in India was based on power-sharing among adversaries, who in the process learned to use democratic institutions to constrain the struggle for power. As such, negotiation has become an essential part of India's politics, and indeed; an integral part of everyday life. In fact, the constant presence of conflict in the local arena is also indicative of the growing propensity of people from all walks of life to assert their rights to dignity, basic needs and security.

Much as one admires the role of Gandhi and Nehru in paving the way for Indian democracy one must see the effectiveness of their leadership in context. The post-war context which soon polarised into competing camps led by the liberal West, and their Soviet rivals provided the room to manoeuvre to Nehru's India to cast Indian democracy as a third way. This made it possible for India to get substantial developmental aid from both camps. The tool box in Chapter 8 explains how Nehru successfully balanced the West and the Soviet blocs. This mitigated the sharp edges of conflict between ideologies at home in India and Nehru, at the helm of the centre-left Congress party became the quintessential mediator—both at home—and abroad. This historical moment gave the window of opportunity in which Indian democracy found its first utterance. By the time the Cold War came to an end, the long spell of the opportunity to go its own way had borne fruit in terms of developing in India a unique 'Indian way', which, has now come to its own, independently of other global powers, to chart out its own room to manoeuvre in the global as well as the domestic arenas.

The making of the 'Indian Miracle'

Now that we have recorded the distinctive features of democracy in India, one needs to understand what makes India's democracy—not explicable in terms of conventional theories—possible. The empirical evidence of the functioning of Indian democracy helps us understand the deeper and more general dimensions of democracy in the light of India's 'counter-factual'²¹ democracy. This helps us explore a theoretical answer to democracy transition and consolidation in non-Western societies. The following arguments point us in that direction.

First and foremost, the historical trajectory of India's politics as we have already seen in Chapter 2 has played a critical role in India's transition to democracy and its consolidation. The largely peaceful Transfer of Power by British colonial rulers to the leaders of the Congress party at Independence ensured the continuity of British institutions and practices in post-independence India. These expanded enormously to take in the norms and values of Indian society and culture in the 1950s, once universal adult franchise and competitive elections ushered millions of local elites into the political arena. The incorporation of organic, collective identities within the structure of institutions based on methodological individualism was facilitated by the interaction of the caste system with large, general constituencies, and simple majority electoral rules. All this happened under the watchful eye of the independent Election Commission, and the Supreme Court of India. This helped adapt European institutions to the reality of India's regions and localities.²² A 'lock-in'²³ between elite interests, mass aspirations and the process of democratization took place. In consequence, India's democratic institutions survived the assault on their autonomy and integrity during the Emergency of 1975–77. The legacy of resistance to authoritarian rule lived on in the form of India's civil rights movements and activists who went on to play an important, moderating role. They

contained the excesses of the bureaucratic authority of the state in places like Kashmir or the North East and curbed the excesses of ideology in the wake of the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s.

A brief comparison with India's South Asian neighbours will help showcase the role of path dependence in securing democracy transition and consolidation. The Indian story starts with the incremental devolution of power and the exercise of ministerial responsibility by leaders of the Freedom Movement. This has had a long history that predates Independence in 1947. The 'one-dominant-party system' (1947–67) with the Indian National Congress at its core and opposition parties at the periphery, exercising power indirectly through coalitions with the factions within the Congress party, in retrospect, appears to have been a training ground for office holding and power-sharing for India's regional and local leaders.

Even when the Congress party lost its hegemonic position following its loss of power in several Indian States and the reduction of its absolute majority in the Parliament to a simple majority in 1967, the system of democratic rule survived pretty much intact through the turbulent years of unstable coalitions that followed. The 'lock-in' of political actors at federal and regional levels, parties, interest groups, civil servants and army, paramilitary and police forces that are crucial to the Indian political system was already created in the 1950s. It has held fast through the trying years of the Indian Emergency (1975–77) and beyond it, during the ascendency of Hindu nationalism and retreat of the state, following liberalization of the economy in the early 1990s.

The form of elite mediation between the modern state and traditional society incorporated into the model of transition was the main plank of the social vision of the Indian National Congress and its policy of consensus and accommodation during the long years of the Freedom Movement. Following Independence, accepted democratic *economic change* as the normative objective of the modern state, and parliamentary democracy based on methodological individualism as its preferred method of achieving it. The juxtaposition of the modern state and traditional society and the evolution of India's hybrid modernity have been on the basis of democratic transition and consolidation. The consequence has been the generation of a high stock of 'political capital'—an effective combination of structure and agency variables such as law and order management, strategic reform and constitutional incorporation of core social values on the one hand, and efficacy, legitimacy and trust on the other—which has helped sustain the lock-in of the modern state and the traditional society.

We learn from Robert Putnam's social capital theory (Putnam et al. 1993) that the necessary ingredients for liberal democracy are social attributes such as high inter-personal trust, voluntary social networks, and norms that are shared across social group. India's caste-bound, hierarchy-ridden traditional society hardly meets these requirements (Mitra 1999). India's anomalous democratic transition can be explained by the country's *political capital* more than social capital. India's political system and process rather than its social structure have become the main agent of change. This concept subsumes a number of factors such as elections, modern political institutions, and their interaction with traditional society that create level playing fields, strategic social and economic reform, accountability, and India's multi-layered citizenship. These democratic capital-generating institutions and processes are briefly described in the arguments that follow.

The *process* of Indian politics—elections as a tool for social mobilization, and response to popular mobilization by the way of appropriate public policies—are the second main factor that has helped India's transition. Regular and effective elections, based on

universal adult franchise, to all important offices and institutions at the central, regional and local levels of the political system, are one of the most significant factors to explain the success of India's democracy. An independent Election Commission oversees elections in India. It is ably supported by an independent judicial system pro-active in the defence of human rights and marginal social groups. Elections have helped induct new social elites in positions of power, and replace hereditary social notables. The electoral process from its early beginnings about six decades *before* Independence has grown enormously, involving a massive electorate of about 600 million men and women, of whom, roughly 60 percent take part in the polls.

While the constitutional structure of India's elections has remained constant over the past seven decades, the electoral process—evidence of the dynamism of social empowerment—has undergone significant changes. The general elections of the 1950s were dominated by traditional leaders of high castes. However, as the logic of competitive elections sank in, cross-caste coalitions replaced 'vote banks' that were based on vertical mobilization, where dominant castes dictated lower social groups. 'Differential' mobilization of voters, which refers to the coming together of people from different status groups, and 'horizontal' mobilization, where people of the same status group coalesce around a collective political objective, have knocked vertical social linkages out of the electoral arena. Today, sophisticated electoral choices based on calculations that yield the best results for individuals and groups are the rule. Electoral empowerment has brought tribes and religions in all social strata into the electoral fray. The political coalition put together by Ms Mayawati, who leads the Bahujan Samaj Party, has skillfully drawn support from Dalits (former untouchables), the upper Hindu castes, and Muslims.

Differential and horizontal electoral mobilisation of socially marginal groups have resulted in policy changes that further demonstrate the deepening of democracy in India. Successive governments have introduced laws to promote social integration, welfare, agrarian relations and social empowerment. Over the past two decades, broad-based political coalitions have forced more extreme ideological movements such as the champions of Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, or for that matter, linguistic and regional interests, to moderate their stance. The percentage of people under the 'poverty line' has decreased from nearly half of the population in the 1960s to a little over a quarter during the past decade. Though the rapid growth India achieved in the decades following the liberalization of the economy in the 1990s has decelerated and high inflation and dwindling Indian rupee have taken the edge off India's success story, the gains have not been entirely lost and India remains poised to be a major economic force in the international arena. In domestic politics, coalitional politics at the centre has stabilized India's major policies (Chapter 7). The government has managed to maintain the pace of the liberalization of the economy, globalization, dialogue with Pakistan, and nuclearisation.

In the third place, India's institutions, held in place by the countervailing forces that they generate, have helped create a level playing field which is crucial for democracy to take root. India's record at successful state formation and, more recently, the progressive retreat of the state from controlling the economy, but without the ensuing chaos seen in many transitional societies caught in similar situations, speak positively of the effectiveness of her institutional arrangement and political processes. These institutional mechanisms are based on constitutional rules that allow for elections at all possible levels and areas of governance, and therefore promote, articulate and aggregate individual choice within India's federal political system. Since the major amendment of the constitution in 1993 that created an intricate quota system, India's six hundred thousand

villages have become the lowest tier of the federal system, bringing direct democracy to the door-step of ordinary villagers and guaranteeing the representation of women, *Dalits* (former Untouchables) and forest dwelling *Tribals*.

The juxtaposition of the division and separation of powers, the fiercely independent media and alert civil rights groups, and a pro-active judiciary have produced a level playing field to facilitate democratic politics. Many of these are colonial transplants that have been adapted by repeated use and re-use to local custom and need. It is significant to note that India's main political parties do not question the legitimacy of India's modern institutions. Although they differ radically in their ideological viewpoints, parties such as the Communist Party, Hindu-nationalist parties like the Shiv Sena, the Bharatiya Janata Party, all share the norms of democracy in contrast to rest of South Asia where even the governing parties want to change institutions and constitution. Not even parties that draw their strength from mobilizing religious cleavages or class conflict object to the right to democratic participation.

The fourth and final argument refers to India's asymmetric but cooperative federalism which has helped balance 'unity and diversity' on the one hand, and 'self-rule and shared rule' on the other. India's federation has simultaneously succeeded in differentiating the political and administrative landscape of India, whilst holding on tightly to the unity and integrity of the state. The boundaries of the federal states have been re-drawn on the lines of mother tongue, making regions coherent cultural and political units. Within this reorganisation, a 'three-language-formula' has emerged under which the bulk of regional governance is done in the local language but Hindi and English are retained as link languages. This helps to generate support for the national principle of 'unity in diversity'. The fears of 'balkanization' that marked the rise of language movements in the 1950s have not borne out. Meanwhile the economy and the development of political coalitions that strive to accommodate small political groups have helped to promote national unity. The liberalization of the economy in 1991 and the gradual opening of the Indian market to international investors have given the states the incentive to emerge as promoters of regional interests.

Simultaneously, regions have also emerged as sites of governance by the transformation of regional movements into parties of power. Coalitions have transformed rebels into stakeholders. The Indian state has devised an ingenious system of enhancing stability of the political system through an indigenous scheme of federalization. By creating new regional and sub-regional governments, federal units can be rearranged. Short term, constitutionally permitted central or even army rule can substitute representative government when the regional political system is unable to sustain orderly rule. Such emergency rule at the regional level is usually withdrawn when the need for the suspension of the normal functioning of parliamentary politics is no longer tenable. The legal responsibility for law and order rests primarily with the regional government but is under the watchful eye of the centre. While the State governments control the regional police, the Constitution of India provides for their superseding by direct rule from Delhi when they fail to maintain lawful governance. However, the maintenance of law and order has become more of a joint venture of Delhi and the federal States. After the end of the 'one dominant party system' (1947–67) the Indian National Congress (INC) ruled both at the centre as well as in the states. However, since the 1960s, the federal States have increasingly acquired autonomy and an authentic political voice in conjunction with Delhi. Successive elections have consolidated India's transition to a multi-party democracy, national unity and political stability.

Within the framework of a national constitution, the Indian political system has managed to safeguard regional identity. The process of regional differentiation is, however, far from over. In view of the difference in time and in context of their formation, regions experience the problem of governance in different ways. For example, caste and class conflict, feeding into violent groups like the Naxalites, challenge orderly rule in Bihar and Jharkhand. Similarly, the decision to grant Statehood to the Telangana movement has intensified similar movements in India's North East. However, India has evolved a process of centre-state cooperation to resolve such conflicts. Many of these regional specificities and vulnerabilities are protected by the constitution of India. Tribal land, for example, cannot easily be transferred to people of non-tribal origin. Special representation is provided to tribal populations and former 'untouchables'. Backward regions are allocated extra recourses by the national Finance Commission for their economic advancement. National planning and the deployment of regular and paramilitary troops help local and regional governments to maintain orderly rule and the respect for due process. The induction of local elites through elections and co-option into the structure of governance through elections and co-option has strengthened the linkage of India's traditional society with modern institutions.

In brief, the successful transformation of a colonized population into citizens of a secular, democratic republic, has contributed to the sustainability of democracy. The main strategy has consisted in the encouraging of rebels, the alienated and the indifferent to become national stakeholders. The strategy's components are: (a) India's institutional arrangement (the Constitution), (b) laws meant to implement the egalitarian social visions underlying the constitution, (c) the double role of the state as a neutral enforcer and as a partisan supporting vulnerable social groups in producing a level playing field, (d) the empowerment of minorities through law and political practice, including India's personal law which guarantees freedom to religious minorities to follow their own laws in the areas of marriage, divorce, adoption and succession, and, finally, (e) Judicialisation which safeguards individual and group rights.

Integration and anxiety: the dark side of Indian democracy

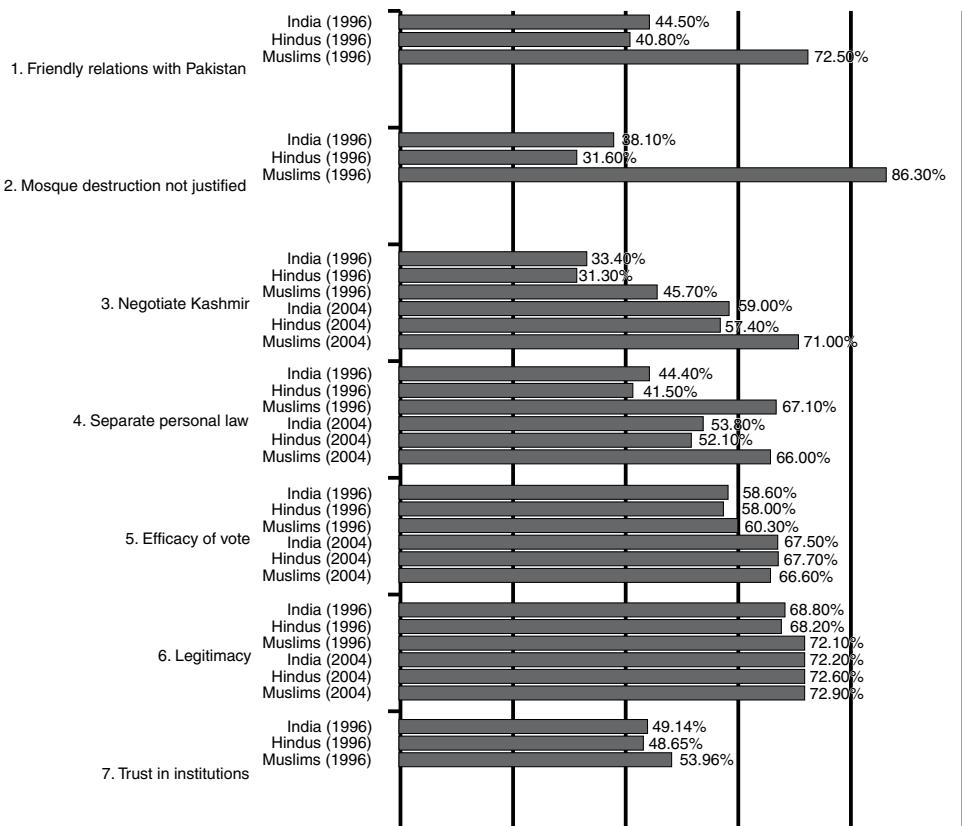
The diligent performance of India's modern institutions, backed up by the political process, innovative methods of power-sharing, constitutional recognition of basic rights and their assertion by potential beneficiaries, and empowerment of social groups which have long remained at the margins of the political system, have brought meaning and substance to formal procedures of democracy. Many of the distributional conflicts analysed in this book result from the success of India's democracy, and more recently, of her economy. That, by itself, is a portent of hope. The judicious and efficient solution of these conflicts over resources has enhanced the legitimacy of the system. The spate of mass movements of the 1950s based on language could be contained through negotiation. The eventual redrawing of the internal map of India in the 1990s, thanks to the States' Reorganisation Commission (1957–58), enhanced the legitimacy of the state and the federal structure.²⁴ Effective management of the conflict based on language in the 1950s produced attractive opportunities for emerging social groups. Since then, new cleavages based on ethnic identity have emerged. Using existing constitutional methods and innovating new ones such as the creation of new administrative and political units, the Indian state has succeeded in bringing a satisfactory solution to most of these conflicts.²⁵

The momentum of Indian development arises from the growing economy. Its pace and direction are influenced mainly by the hunger of the middle class for cars, electronic gadgets and other symbols of affluent living have vastly intensified India's energy needs, the aspiration of the lower middle classes for what their social superiors have already achieved, and the resentment of the politicised poor against what they perceive as their exclusion from a fair share of the pie. The two-pronged strategy that the government has developed to cope with the conflicts that ensue from the sense of relative deprivation—the hiatus between aspirations and achievements—is an elaborate system of controls and subsidy to customers on the one hand and efforts to enhance capacity through production, import and the price mechanism on the other. Social mobility and the growth of population make the infrastructural needs—such as transport, communication, education, health, clean drinking water and prevention of communicable diseases—sharper. Simultaneously, however, the liberalization of the economy and the steady integration of the Indian market with the international market economy threaten to disenfranchise parts of the population and prevent others from joining the consuming classes.

India's conflicts and cleavages often manifest themselves in complex combinations—such as ethnic conflict, secessionist movements, inter-community violence and terrorist attacks. Students of comparative politics, equipped with the competition over scarce resources as an all-purpose key to social conflict, might look askance at India because so often these demands and potential conflicts are articulated in a form and an idiom that are deeply embedded in culture. From their location in villages, urban localities and peripheral regions, India's national, regional and local elites, leaders of ethnic groups and social activists have mastered the art of political manipulation through a deft combination of protest and participation. They draw on political strategies that encompass the symbolic and the material, collective identity and memory and pre-modern values to promote goals that are essentially modern.²⁶

The violent disaffection of parts of the population, particularly when they belong to minority communities, questions the firm belief in the incremental diffusion of the norms of citizenship that has remained an article of faith on the part of the Indian state. The evidence that one gets from public opinion surveys about systematic difference between the Muslim and Hindu electorate on some critical issues affecting identity in India are indicative of a rift. However, despite a systematic difference on the issues of the Babri mosque, Kashmir, Pakistan and personal law where Hindu opinion tends to be less inclusive than the Muslim opinion (see Diagram 9.1), there is nevertheless an important balancing factor. On each of the three issues of efficacy, legitimacy and trust, Muslim opinion is more anxious and less integrated than Hindu opinion, indicating both the willingness and the ability to use the normal institutional channels of the state to articulate one's political and cultural demands. The existence of this political connectivity creates the hope that separate and conflicting identities can still share a set of core values common to all the parties such as trust in the Supreme Court and the Election Commission, and the civic virtues enshrined in article 51 of the Indian Constitution, and be open to Judicialisation.

India has a track record in transforming identity-based issues into transactional politics by undertaking a reform in the institutional arrangement. The States Reorganisation Commission of 1957 and the recent creation of the three new States of Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are examples of this capacity of the Indian state. The legal-political regime on India's personal law which permits different legal systems in the same State shows how different communities, who consider their laws on marriage,



1. 'India should make more efforts to develop friendly relations with Pakistan. Do you agree?' (Agree)
2. 'Some people say that the demolition (of Babri Mosque in 1992 by a mob of Hindu fanatics in the northern city of Avodhva) was justified while others say it was not justified. What would you say – was it justified or not justified?' (not ajustified)
3. 'People's opinions are divided on the issue of the Kashmir problem. Some people say that Government should suppress the agitation by any means while others say that this problem should be resolved by negotiations/mutual dialogue. What would you say, should the agitation be suppressed or resolved by/through negotiations?' (solved by negotiations)
4. 'Every community should be allowed to have its own laws to govern marriage and property rights. Do you agree or disagree?' (agree)
5. 'Do you think your vote has an affected how things are run in this country, or do you think your vote makes no difference?' (vote makes a difference)
6. 'Suppose there were no parties or assemblies and elections were not held – do you think that the government in this country can be run better?' (no)
7. 'How much trust do you have in political institutions?' (overall trust)

Diagram 9.1 Contrasting Hindu and Muslim attitudes on issues of identity and empowerment.

Source: The data in this table were collected from a national sample representing the Indian electorate. The survey was conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, in 1996 and 2004.

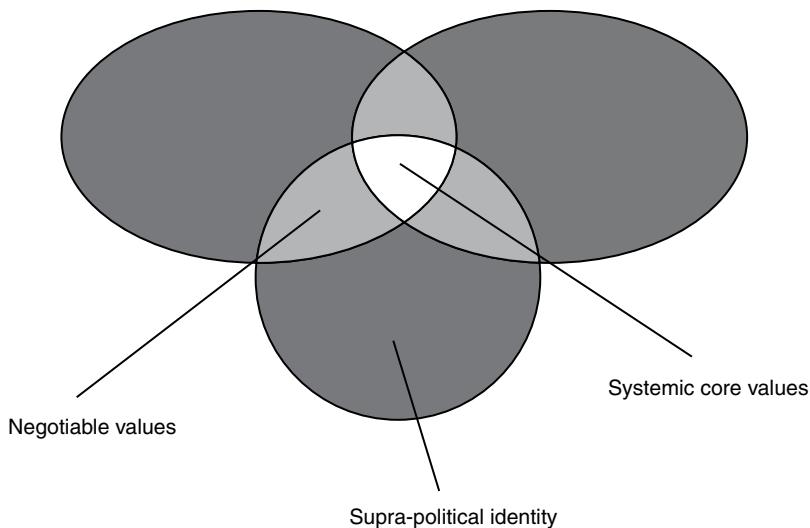


Figure 9.2 Negotiating identity in divided societies: interface of individual values.

Source: Mitra (2005), p. 256.

divorce, adoption and succession as essential to and constitutive of their identity, can still share a common territorial space.

Once this is achieved, as one can see in the case of many personal laws co-existing within the same constitution in India, a private sphere, unique to individuals and groups can gain legitimate acceptance on a reciprocal basis by all concerned. Under the sovereign presence of this core (see un-shaded area at the core of the three ellipsoids in Figure 9.2 which represents the overlapping values of the three groups), defended by trusted and respected institutions like the Supreme Court and the Election Commission, different communities can negotiate the terms under which they can share the same territorial space. Many examples of this process, for instance, how, in a multi-religious village, the Hindu religious processions will take a specific route to avoid disturbing law and order, or for that matter, how much space on public roads can be occupied for Friday prayers by Muslims, can be seen in the everyday political life of India.

Conclusion: for a comparative analysis of Indian democracy

Despite glaring failures in some regions and localities, on the whole India has made a successful transition to democracy and its consolidation. Indeed, such is the power and credibility of Indian democracy that even political groups which do not necessarily share the liberal premises of democracy such as Indian Maoists, Kashmiri separatists, the insurgents of the North-East, nevertheless articulate their demands in terms of the extension of *their* democratic rights!

At the core of India's democratic political system lies a paradox. I argue that strategic reform, accountability, and social policies that balance efficiency with justice are the essence of India's democratic governance. However, while democracy might offer the best solution to politics *within* the system, but how good is it at coping with politics *of*

the system? Does the democratic process have the power and the strategic room to manoeuvre to reform the political system of which it is a part? What additional resources might India need to consolidate liberal, democratic governance?

The Indian achievement of democracy and development is in sharp contrast to its arrested development or outright failure in the neighbouring countries. India has succeeded in reaching the goal of democracy and development set at Independence. As such, India's counterfactual democracy, successful pessimistic predictions made on general theories of transition bears significant implications. There are some important lessons here for the comparative analysis of transition to democracy and its consolidation in the non-Western world. India's secular, democratic, federal path—if it were to be a model—would leave Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bhutan with an invidious choice between national identity and democracy transition. Their constitutions attach a different salience to the relationship of religion and politics and to the indivisibility of unitary power of the nation, particularly in the case of Sri Lanka. If they were to follow the putatively causal relationship of democracy and secularism and federalism, a radical change in their institutional arrangement would be imperative for them to achieve Indian style liberal democracy. The book has attempted to overcome this India 'bias' by developing a more general model of democratization that would pay adequate attention to the specific contexts of the countries concerned. Rather than suggesting tolerant Indian culture and secularism as indispensable to the success of democracy, the approach taken here develops a general variable called 'political capital' which constitutes an efficient path for the transition from authoritarian rule to popular democracy. Beyond this general stance, the decision-making elites in each country have to find their specific way to democracy, making appropriate choices among alternatives offered by their local context.

India's success with democracy has been brought about through a power-sharing political process ensconced in a hybrid political culture that dovetails modernity and tradition. The Indian case shows that strategic reform, accountability, and social policies that balance efficiency with justice, can sustain the progress of democracy and development in a post-colonial context. India's social cleavages—based on caste, class, region, language and ethnicity—are cross-cutting rather than cumulative. Some key institutions for conflict resolution such as the judicial system have been available for a considerable length of time prior to Independence. India's national, regional and local elites, leaders of ethnic groups and social activists have mastered the art of political manipulation and power-sharing. Through a deft combination of protest and participation, they have formulated political strategies that combine cultural, symbolic and religious values with material interests. The Indian case can help other countries identify institutional arrangements that are appropriate to their culture and context, building on the democratic longing of the people and combining cultural authenticity with a firm link to the general parameters of democracy.

Notes

- 1 For an elaboration of this argument, See, Subrata Mitra, "How Exceptional is India's Democracy? Path Dependence, Political Capital, and Context in South Asia", in *India Review* Vol. 12, No 4; (October 2013).
- 2 See Subrata Mitra, "Turning Aliens into Citizens: A 'Tool-Kit' for a Trans-disciplinary Policy Analysis", in Subrata Mitra, *Citizenship and the Flow of Ideas in the Era of Globalization: Structure, Agency, and Power* (Delhi: Samskriti; 2012), p. 88 for a brief summary of the flow of the concept of citizenship from the Greek city state to the present day nation-states.

- 3 Family resemblance (*Familienähnlichkeit* in German) is a philosophical idea made popular by Ludwig Wittgenstein with the best known exposition given in his posthumously published book *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) (2001) [1953]. Blackwell Publishing.
- 4 Lipset (1959: 69) refers to the symposium on the role of culture in democratization, published in Ernest S. Griffith, John Plamenatz and J. Roland Pencock, “Cultural Prerequisites to a Successfully Functioning Democracy: A Symposium”, APSR, vol. 50 (1956). In contrast to the claims of ‘culturists’ who see the core of the democratic impulse in “religion, particularly Christian ethics” (as argued by Lipset 1959: 70), he brings in modernization of the economic structure as the main driver of democratization.
- 5 Thus, for example, the parliamentary elections of 2009 involve 714 million people, more than twice the population of the United States, who are eligible to vote in an election held in five phases spread over one month (Reuters: New Delhi, 15 April 2009).
- 6 Rudolph and Rudolph (1987).
- 7 See Mitra (2008a), pp. 557–58.
- 8 Lipset (1959: 69–105) suggests that in order to succeed as a democracy, a society has to attain certain levels of social and economic development.
- 9 Huntington (1968), p. 55.
- 10 See Moore (1966).
- 11 The Indian experience stands in sharp contrast to her South Asian neighbours. Universal adult franchise was introduced in Ceylon in the early 1930s, even before limited franchise was available in some Indian provinces. The Muslim League, which under the leadership of Jinnah, championed the cause of Pakistan, became the ruling party in the new state after Independence. Neither of the two states has been as successful as India in sustaining democracy. See Alavi, pp. 19–71, and Mick Moore, pp. 155–91, in Mitra (1990).
- 12 In the wake of the terrorist attack on Mumbai, the new Home Minister Mr Chidambaram convened a conference of all Chief Ministers to share the intelligence information gathered by Indian agencies, and to express solidarity. Despite the fact of the proximity of the next general election it was significant that the regional leaders rose beyond party politics to express solidarity with the Indian state.
- 13 The principled position of India as one and indivisible characterizes all the mainstream political parties. An all-party resolution of the Lok Sabha in 1995 declared Kashmir to be an integral and inalienable part of Indian territory. The initiative and legislative competence for the rearrangement of internal boundaries, creation of new States and renaming of existing units lie very much with the central executive.
- 14 Seventh schedule: Maintaining law and order is a prime responsibility of the State government. Failure to do so can invite drastic steps from the Union government under Art. 356.
- 15 Mitra (2008).
- 16 See Mitra and Singh (2009).
- 17 A subsequent revision of the definition came with the demand of Indians living abroad for succession to property in India, leading, eventually, to the Persons of Indian Origin Card (PIO), which explicitly recognizes the rights of citizenship, not as binary, but as incrementally gradual. The ultimate prize of double nationality is in the offing, bringing the discourse full circle, away from the exclusive reliance on territory.
- 18 Izhar Ahmad Khan vs. Union of India (UOI), AIR 1962, SC 1052. The case dealt in detail with the following questions: the rights to and of citizenship; the issues of Partition-related citizenship; the value of a passport in determining citizenship; and the question of domicile versus citizenship. The issue in this case was the constitutional validity of Section 9(2) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, which dealt with the termination of citizenship. This case exemplified the policies which discouraged multiple or even dual citizenships, and held that upon acquiring in any manner the citizenship of another country, an Indian citizen automatically loses Indian citizenship.
- 19 See Bachan Lal Kalgotra vs. State of Jammu and Kashmir, AIR 1987, SC 1169. In the last decade, case law has tended towards a more flexible and all-encompassing understanding of Indian stipulations with relation to property and, of course, the onset of economic liberalization has given wings to even further judicial liberalization of these concepts. Similarly, recent laws allowing NRIs (Non-Resident Indians) to own property have already been registered in case law.

- 20 When asked ‘Suppose there were no parties or assemblies and elections were not held—do you think that the government in this country can be run better?’ 69 percent of Indians argue the opposite. But the number of Muslims, at 72 percent, making the same argument in favour of retaining the democratic structure, is even higher than the average in 1996. However, by 2004 India’s average opinion—at 72.2 percent—on this issue appears to have converged with that of Muslims. However, these findings should be seen in comparison to the less sanguine picture provided by Sachar committee report. For a discussion, see Riaz Hasan, ed., *Indian Muslims: Struggling for Equality of Citizenship* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; 2016).
- 21 The concept ‘counter-factual’ is used to refute existing theory based on empirical exemplars. The expression is used to characterize India’s democracy as a phenomenon whose existence could not be anticipated from within classical theories of democracy and democratization. For a theoretical exploration of this theme, see Stepan et al. (2011).
- 22 Another factor for India’s survival was the Partition of British India into India and Pakistan, which negated the Muslim League objective of a weak centre and devolved periphery. This created the Congress wish of strong “Union,” cooperative States and a strong commitment to prevent secessionism. See Kumarasingham (2013, chapter 4).
- 23 North (1991: 94) describes a lock-in as a solution which once reached “is difficult to exit from”. In a two-person zero-sum game, a lock-in can be thought of as a Nash-equilibrium from which neither player has an incentive to withdraw unilaterally.
- 24 In retrospect, the failure to undertake a similar step began the slow unravelling of the state in Pakistan and continues to be the source of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.
- 25 The creation of Gorkhaland within the State of West Bengal and three new States—Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, testifies to the strategy of containment through the creation of new federal units.
- 26 These themes have been dealt with at greater detail in Subrata Mitra and Michael Liebig, *Kautilya’s Arthashastra—an Intellectual Portrait: The Classical Roots of Modern Politics in India* (Baden-Baden: Nomos; 2016).

10 Conclusion

Emergent India

The world now accepts that the 21st century is India's century.

P.M. Modi, *The Times of India*, Sept 28, 2015

In a perverse way, in Modi's strengths also lies India's fragility.

Ravi Veloor, *India Rising: Fresh Hope, New Fears* (2016), p. 358

Images of emergent India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the most visible face of the country's aspirations polarise opinion, both at home in India, and abroad. The epigraphs to this chapter show this polarity of attitude—the confidence, buoyance of a resurgent India—and the voice of caution and moderation. Except for the national Emergency of 1975–77, and the leadership style of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the scale and intensity of such debate about India, and the Prime Minister of the country has been rare. However, in the span of the two years that have passed since Mr Modi, at the head of a decisive majority in the Lok Sabha, led the BJP to the top post in the Indian government, one can discern a growing consensus. The global brand recognition of Prime Minister Modi itself has shifted from an ardent advocate of combative Hindu nationalism to that of a leader committed to global governance and development ‘for all’.¹ As for India, most commentators today agree that it is no longer an *emerging country*. But these observers also assert that India has not yet finally *emerged*, and become a stable democracy where liberal values are securely established.² Opinions about India’s prospects also remain divided. Even the corporate sector, among the most ardent supporters of India’s new government,³ voices some residual scepticism about country’s ability to stay the course of liberal, democratic, self-sustaining development.⁴

The concluding chapter sums up some of these concerns in the form of questions about current policy initiatives, options and prognosis. On which areas has India made crucial breakthroughs? Which dark spots lurk under the surface and what course-corrections might be needed? How conducive is the process of majoritarian democracy for the sustainability of economic development, and, creation of a cohesive and inclusive political community? Does the fact that the country is perpetually in the campaign mode cause essential, long-term goals to be superseded by short-term thinking, and strategizing?⁵ Finally, how secure is the social foundation of India’s secularism?

These questions, vital for *emergent India*, have formed key elements of our narrative. The coming together of a broad-based, anti-colonial movement, and, a visionary and strategic leadership, had driven India towards Independence from British colonial rule. Subsequent to the *Transfer of Power*, a robust and resilient political system was founded

by Jawaharlal Nehru and the collective leadership of the Indian National Congress. As a fortuitous legacy, the Freedom Movement had generated the requisite political capital on which to build a resilient and deepening post-colonial democracy. From the comparative analysis of this significant accomplishment undertaken in the previous chapter, our focus now shifts back to the social, economic and political challenges of the Indian case. In this chapter, we concentrate on the unfolding agenda of reform, innovation and policy decisions that are salient for India's future. The core of this agenda consists of the problematic relationship between democracy and development.

Democracy and development: balancing the twin imperative

A leading strand in the academic literature on democracy in transitional societies has held that democratic regimes in these societies have little chance of success. Some diminution of democratic rights, it argued, might be necessary for the growth of the economy, and eventually, of democratic institutions. A similar argument from advocates of the 'developmental' state suggests that the agenda of development needs to be above the fray. The rough and tumble of everyday politics needs to be firmly held within the parameters of a political system wedded to a developmental design, which itself remains supra-political. India presents a counterfactual to both schools. Right from the outset, as we have seen in chapters seven and nine, development and democracy have worked in tandem. In fact, the complementary roles of both have been a necessary condition of their simultaneous success.

The seamless connectivity of democracy and development is not, however, the first image that comes across when one looks at India. A visit to the country, actual or virtual, can be a chastening experience for enthusiasts of democracy and development. A perusal of India's print media—in English, but even more so in vernacular languages, and the lively political debates on India's multi-channel television networks—might give the impression of a chaotic political process, a fragmented political community and a political system whose capacity is constantly overtaken by the expectations it gives rise to.

Deeper analysis, as I have argued in this book, reveals a more satisfying picture. Despite the stubborn images of 'mystical India'⁶ and that of a country steeped in poverty, India has made a breakthrough into sustained growth, and low inflation. A whole generation of Indians belonging to the middle class—estimated to be between 200 hundred to 350 million people—have had access to credit, housing, education, health care, travel—at a scale that is radically different from the immediate post-independence generation. Indian tourists, professionals and Indian companies on the main street in foreign countries are no longer the novelty they once were. With relatively secure borders, free and fair elections, orderly governance and global connectivity, India today is a significant player in the global arena. India's voice—no longer equivocal, nor ringing with shrill 'third-world' rhetoric of a bygone era—is listened to with respect by global stakeholders. This is the main message that Modi's India seeks to communicate to audiences abroad, building particularly on the vast Indian diaspora, spread across the world.

India under Modi: continuity or change?

In many ways, India today has become a 'normal' country. After the strident rhetoric that brought it to power, the BJP at the core of the central government, and its nemesis, the Aam Admi Party (AAP), ruling Delhi State, have focused their attention on

governance and everyday politics. This leads them to implicitly cooperate with one another in spite of the strident public recriminations that lingers on. The BJP which assumed office in 2014 as a single majority party—a feat not achieved by any political party in three decades—has learnt the limits of its power and the need for cooperation in course of two challenging years in office.⁷ With Narendra Modi, India has for the first time a Prime Minister who has battled his way to the top of the political and social ladder, starting at the bottom. In power, Narendra Modi has discovered both the limits and the potential of Prime Ministerial power.⁸

The spate of writings that mark the first two years of the Modi government offer mixed reviews. The hiatus of expectations that the induction of the first government with a clear majority and the limited success in the formulation and implementation of a robust agenda of reforms account for the negative press.⁹ The *Wall Street Journal* records praise for some spectacular achievements. “In the fiscal year ended March 31, India’s gross domestic product rose 7.6%, helping it overtake China as the fastest-growing big economy in the world. Inflation is almost half of what it was at a couple of years ago. India’s budget deficit has shrunk to 3.9% of the GDP. ... Mr Modi’s government has relaxed foreign-investment rules in more than a dozen sectors including insurance, pensions and railways, cut red tape and pushed through legislative proposals to simplify bankruptcy procedures and strengthened intellectual property rights. It has also fast-tracked road building, railway and highway expansion.”¹⁰

One of the most important causes few analysts have focused on is the near total absence of previous experience in running the Union Government on the part of Mr Modi or that of the key members of his team. That explains the relative lack of the political resources to build broad-based policy consensus with the opposition, and the hiatus between the government and the opposition when it comes to a sense of shared responsibility, trust and accountability.

There is also a question of leadership style. The first thing most observers of the new government notice is the sense of urgency and restless energy that Mr Modi carries about himself and seeks to endow on his government. Some have commented on the replacement of the wrangling that went on within the UPA coalition with a leadership style that is akin to a business house where the CEO sets the agenda, takes over the accountability and does not brook any opposition to his leadership. In the early years of Prime Minister Modi, his style gave the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) a central role in policy making. However, being in office has transformed Modi’s style of functioning. In his second year, Modi comes across as

far more aware of the complexities of managing a country where you can give orders but have no guarantee that they will be followed at lower levels. He now appears far more realistic about his abilities to achieve transformations on a major scale. Instead of relying solely on his massive mandate, he is aware that he now has to focus on root-and-branch reforms.¹¹

Quite significantly, in office, Prime Minister Modi has picked up some of the successful policies of the predecessors such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rule Employment Guarantee Act, and continue supporting them.

Some of Modi’s greatest triumphs have come in the area of international relations. He has been able to show that one does not have to be completely in agreement on all fronts in order to pursue a robust international relation. In a flourish, reminiscent of Nehru at his strongest, Modi remarks in his interview with Arnab Goswami that one can find the

room to manoeuvre between differences if one holds clearly to one's policy perspective. In consequence, "a new equilibrium has been reached with China after some hiccups, economic ties have been boosted with Russia and Modi has built an excellent rapport with US President Barack Obama."¹²

While some commentators credit Mr Modi for acquiring a sense of economic gradualism, many have pilloried him for failing to curb the excesses of Hindu zealots who have questioned the loyalty of India's Muslims or have undertaken vigilante activities against the consumption of beef. His lack of prior ministerial experience with governance at the national level and relative lack of familiarity with parliamentary manoeuvres might explain the initial inability to build a winning coalition on the passage of key legislation in the Rajya Sabha where the NDA did not have a majority. He has been seen as personally responsible for poor strategic thinking leading to electoral setbacks in Delhi and Bihar. However, in vast and variable Indian politics, things rarely remain static for too long. With the NDA's success in various assembly elections and the recent passage of the GST, the pendulum appears to be swinging in Mr Modi's favour once again.

India, rising: but where to?

Shifting the focus back from the past two years to the seven decades since Independence helps set a diachronic perspective on India's development. Instead of being treated as exceptional, India's political process finds explanation in the normal career ambitions of the average politicians, engaged in the everyday politics of administration, seeking to gain influence and maximise power. Of course, like all large countries with a continuous link to a classical heritage and lingering, residual presence of unresolved historical conflicts, politics in India has dimensions that are specific to the country's culture and sacred geography. However, the variables that impinge on the country's noisy but resilient democracy and steady social and economic development are amenable to comparative analysis based on a general model. Presented in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.1), the main explanatory model that underpins this book connects the politics of the state, regions and localities, with strategic policies of reforms. This is what accounts for steady growth and orderly rule in India.

A perusal of the manifestos of major Indian political parties shows that the theme of structural continuity and dynamic equilibrium through social mobilisation, representation and policy implementation is common to them. There may be differences in their interpretation of the 'idea of India' and the emphasis attached to their preferred strategy of how to get there. Nonetheless, there is a consensus on the main parameters of the system among political elites spread across India, located at different levels within the parties. This is crucial for the functioning of the political system.

India's political system has evolved over two millennia (Chapter 2). While each historical period has left a residue that has enriched India's culture and politics, India's transformation during the British colonial rule has been the most spectacular and enduring. It was a period of experimentation, but also of conflation of the modern and the pre-modern. Innovative practices like rule through intermediaries and limited franchise had achieved an admirable economy of force (Chapter 2) for the vast and sprawling British Empire. But the system, based on limited franchise, elite collaboration and unabashed use of force in defence of imperial interests, was inherently unstable. Those who had tasted limited power constantly clamoured for more. The shrinking economy, stagnant agriculture, declining manufacturing and industry left few avenues for upward

mobility open to Indians. Government service became the main ladder for upward mobility. Unrest resulting from the gap between aspirations and achievements began to feed into radical movements, often inspired by European ideologies. However, the emergence of the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi created a unique method of national struggle that reined in radicalism without compromising the urge towards independence. This became the essential core of the national movement. Elite Hindu castes had initially led the freedom movement. Under the impetus of Gandhi's commitment to the welfare of the lower strata, the national movement entered a binding contract with the *kisan* (peasants), *majdoor* (workers), Harijans and Adivasis. The result was the emergence of a popular movement for Independence—in contrast to the movements for independence in Ceylon or the struggle for Pakistan which remained elite-led.

Quite fortuitously, the leaders of India's Freedom Movement came mostly from liberal professions of law, journalism, medicine, teaching and other mostly middleclass occupations. Some had been educated in England and the United States, and all aspired to an independent India within the structure of parliamentary democracy of the British variety. As such, the movement remained firmly within the framework of orderly rule. Power was transferred by the British to those who had been groomed to take over and run the system, expanding the franchise and mopping up support through a variety of mechanisms. The Congress system acted as mid-wife to the birth of a competitive, multi-party democracy with which we are familiar (Chapter 6) today. Be it in terms of institutional evolution and innovation, representation, legislation, implementation or judicialisation, one can trace a linear development. Started before Independence, this continued seamlessly through the *Transfer of Power*, the rise and decline of the Congress Party System and most recently, the entry of Hindu nationalists into government.

The chapters on India's institutional arrangement and federalism cover the story of how the political centre grew in salience and strengthened its linkage with the peripheries of Indian society, and how the politicisation of peripheral groups led to the development of new centres. These would eventually become powerful regional political systems, making India's federalism real, and adding federalisation as a method of state formation and the legitimisation of power. The economy and foreign policy (Chapters 7 and 8), chimed in to keep pace with the evolution of the political system and the unfolding of India's parliamentary democracy. All these factors have created a dynamic equilibrium that continues, despite radical changes such as the move from Nehruvian non-alignment to engagement with major powers or for that matter, from a planned economy to one based on liberalisation and integration with the international political economy, and from a Congress system to the rule of the BJP.

The common theme in this long narrative has been precisely this forming and re-framing of dynamic equilibrium of the political system. Just when one despaired of new fault lines the malady appears to generate its own remedy in the form of mediators who step in to manage gradual change. New, innovative methods have been found to generate solutions amendable to the major stakeholders. Political order has remained both firm and accountable. Basic needs have been responded to through strategic social and economic reform. There has been constant, vigilant solicitude for the accommodation of sacred values.

This concluding chapter has built on the central goal of weaving the structure, process and policy process in Indian politics to explain the dynamics of transformation, change and continuity of the Indian political system. The book is aimed at uncovering

these general processes that lie unseen under the veneer of everyday political life in a vast country.¹³ The ensemble of events, statistics and cultural vignettes that one encounters in India's politics are a testimony to the vigorous health of the Indian state, the market and its civil society. These, alone and sometimes acting together, generate new norms, set up appropriate institutions and act as the agents of democratisation, governance and political consolidation. As the system has grown in bulk and deepened its reach, its limitations have also become increasingly visible.

However, doubts about India being finally able to 'deliver' persist. Well into its seventh decade following Independence, democracy in India thrives but continues to be fuzzy at the edges.¹⁴ The Constitution holds the Union of India to be 'indestructible', but violent dissent persists in Kashmir, in the North East and in other parts of the land. The economy sustains unprecedented levels of growth. This was dented by the financial crisis that struck the world economy in 2008, but India appears to have coped with the fallout effectively. Efficient financial management has kept inflation within manageable limits, though, lately, hefty increases in food prices have given cause for concern. The issue remains of how to redistribute money to the increasingly assertive poor without eroding the incentives to work, take risks and expectations for higher wages and profits. Thanks to television, the new culture of buying and selling has trickled down deep into Indian society and in consequence, share prices have risen steadily, despite periodic setbacks. Nonetheless, the dark sides of democracy—corruption, violent crime and challenges to governance and poor public service delivery—keep pace with the broadening and deepening of democracy and development. In some parts of India, civil society languishes, as assertive majorities threaten to appropriate the public sphere in the name of collective identity, pitching democracy and secularism at odds with each other. Yet—defying logic, dark forebodings and in apparent contradiction with itself—India, seemingly, goes on.

India's future

The most salient achievement of India's political system has been to induce a sense of dynamic equilibrium where the state and market balance one another, and in the process, generate both the incentives for growth and redistribution. There is a consensus about the need for this balance among political and administrative elites, leaders of business and industry, the media, civil society and the judiciary. A similar resonance can be seen in the ideological convergence of India's mainstream political parties, whose political priorities focus on the twin imperatives of growth and justice. Following the parliamentary elections of 2014, this consensus appeared to have broken down during the stalled parliamentary debates when major legislative bills came up for discussion. However, both the NDA and the Congress-led UPA appear to have registered the need for restoring balance and enabling compromise. Similarly, the imperative for spreading democratic rights defines the consensus among parties of the Left and the Right. Even those opposed to parliamentary democracy actively assert their democratic rights and solicit the support of civil rights groups, the judiciary and the media.

The federal units of India have increasingly acquired their own persona and have emerged as champions of investment and governance in their own regions. Federalization has led to the growth of rather independent units across the system. Some States have been more successful than others in attracting investment and have forged a partnership between the state, business and civil society pursuing a shared vision for their

own region. The emergence of regional centres that are now much more confident of their identity and autonomy but which nevertheless remain connected with the national mainstream has been mediated by the interlinked process of elections. India's never-ending series of elections to the assembly, panchayats and national elections get entangled because of the interlinkage of parties, coalitions, corporate groups and interest groups that constitute the support base of parties. This process, while helping with regional differentiation and national integration also facilitates social mobility of subaltern and peripheral social groups. Overall, the transition from a hierarchical social structure to a pluralist political system has been orderly and peaceful, with coalitions softening the blow to those who were once at the top, and getting those at the bottom to learn the game before moving into power. The process has been reinforced by India's judiciary which has emerged as the protector of civil rights, particularly in disturbed areas, and the fact that it has remained relatively uncorrupt has added to its stature. Through interpretation of the Constitution in case laws, public service litigation and a variety of judicial investigative commissions appointed by the government to inquire into specific issues, the judiciary and judicialisation have emerged as supplementary methods for norm creation.

After nearly seven decades of Independence, India's original borders remain intact, though, cross-border terrorism and exchange of shelling between India and Pakistan and unsolved boundary issues with China inject a degree of disquiet into foreign policy and security. Internal order is maintained through a combination of police, paramilitary forces and the deployment of army when needed. The armed forces of India have remained under civilian control, and overall the military has remained apolitical. The intervention of the army has helped disturbed areas from slipping into anarchy. Such interventions of the army have been at the command of the civilian rulers, and remained accountable to the civil government and the judiciary, even in those areas where the existence of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act has given the army some more leeway for operational purposes. The presence of the army in parts of the country where secessionist movements are active, while deemed necessary by the civilian authorities, is often contested by segments of the local population. For ardent supporters of Indian democracy, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act is an inconvenient fact of political life.

The anomaly of armed forces having to protect democracy is closely linked to India's difficult relationship with Pakistan. In a parallel to the Indian equivocation in 2001 in reaction to the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament, the 2008 onslaught on Mumbai has left the Indian government in a quandary. India had engaged in an act of 'coercive diplomacy' in 2001 by a massive mobilisation along the Pakistani border, only to demobilize after ten months, with no specific results achieved. Still, the ambiguous messages emanating from Delhi—the sense of *déjà vu*, simultaneously appearing conciliatory towards the Pakistani state and at the same time accusing the Pakistani government of complicity—are indicative of an urgent need for fresh thinking.¹⁵

There are crucial areas where 'project India' remains very much a 'work in progress'. Re-inventing the inclusive nation, finding the right incentives to make public service delivery more effective, balancing the linkages to South Asian neighbours as well as global ambitions, and the Kashmir conundrum are some of the main issues that require deeper attention from policymakers and serious, sustained academic research. How to accommodate ethnic separatism within the framework of India's political community to spread the gains of an emerging economy to the marginal sections of the population, and how to protect the democratic political system from its enemies, both

indigenous and external, are issues that call for urgent attention. Defining moments in India's post-Independence politics—the destruction of the Babri mosque in 1992, the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat in 2002, the spate of terrorist attacks culminating in the 'siege' of Mumbai in 2008—all point towards these core questions. What does India's collective identity consist of and how might it be sustained? What responsibility must India's citizens bear in defence of the Indian nation? How to adapt the logic of the capitalist market economy to the imperative of making equal citizens out of the subaltern populations of a post-colonial state? How to provide incentives that enhance skills, accelerate productivity and promote social capital, without, at the same time, creating clientelist dependency?

There seems to be a triangular relationship between the sense of declining commitment to secularism, alienation of sections of the minority population, and terror networks extending to small towns and villages beyond capital cities. This is a source of deep concern. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who had taken an uncharacteristically strong position in his accusation against Pakistan's use of terror as state policy, had stressed that 'inheritance of a great historical experience of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-caste and multi-lingual society contributed to India's sense of nationhood'. These sentiments have often been endorsed by today's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, that India has to examine her own record with regard to disaffection amongst minority populations, has not been the focus of any serious debate.¹⁶ India's opinion makers have taken positions that range from the complacent to the dismissive, referring to terrorists merely as 'misguided youth' rather than indicating the underlying issues of legitimacy deficit, persistent poverty and disaffection.¹⁷ These debates skirt around a vital issue linked to the project of nation-building in South Asia, one that ties together India and Pakistan, in some sense, as still unfolding nations in search of a stable base.

The violence that marks Hindu-Muslim conflict and terrorist attacks carry the subliminal message of nations still struggling to be born.¹⁸ In his excellent review of new Partition literature, Siddhartha Deb links the incomplete project of nation-building in South Asia, religious conflict and terrorist attacks to the solicitude of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim elites—the 'educated, middle-class urban milieu of the burgeoning cities'—to cast their new, modern, neo-religious identities onto a national space. The Pakistani 'nation' of 1947 came unstuck on this issue in the Liberation War of 1971—and remains, still, uncertain. The 'nation' that Nehru stitched together from the fragments of Gandhi's inclusive Hinduism, Fabian socialism, and the colonial legacy of balancing paternalist rule with strategic accommodation has soldiered on, but has found its limits in Kashmir, the North-East and those parts of India where large Muslim elites and masses remain disaffected and alienated from the Indian mainstream.¹⁹ In the absence of a national project on citizenship, the constitutional provisions for equal rights and obligations remain a dead-letter.²⁰

Finally, India's changing political landscape, with elections to the central, State and local governments, and all manners of public bodies whose managers need to be accountable to the public, provides a great opportunity for popular participation. However, India's electoral timetable is of a kind where some election is taking place somewhere, at any given time. These elections also serve as mid-term evaluations of the parties in power, reinforcing power-sharing, transforming rebels into stakeholders, and movements into parties. The flip side of the coin is that political actors stay perpetually

tuned on campaign mode. Perhaps, the re-linking of national and State elections could transfer some of the time lost in campaigning back to long-term thinking on the salient issues of the nation, state and the economy.

The remit of this introductory text does not extend beyond a diagnostic description of the state of play,²¹ and indicating some necessary steps that are needed to sustain security, democratic governance and inclusive development. What those steps might be will need deeper attention at the level of social research and policy analysis. India needs to focus on the fundamental basis of nationhood and to rejuvenate the political consensus that sustained the state and an expanding civil society. This can be best done as part of a national project for the enhancement of social capital and political trust, institution-building, reinforcing India's countervailing forces, and India's indigenous modernity, which includes taking popular categories, seriously. Above all else, there is one thing that is abundantly clear: there is a need to look beyond dangerous expedients such as merely attributing disaffection to 'misguided youth' or to transforming moral outrage into jobs and votes through the electoral mechanism, even when elections are free and fair. The issue of achieving legitimacy and building collective identity, both within the framework of a majoritarian democracy will continue to call for careful attention of policy makers and scholars.²²

Democracies function best when no specific hand holds all the cards, and the cards themselves are constantly shuffled so that those at the top of the deck do not develop the illusion of permanence and those at the bottom do not get hemmed into dangerous alienation. The absence of a 'loyal opposition', waiting in the wings to wrest power from the ruling party continues to inject a degree of uncertainty to the policy process. However, the stability of the NDA and UPA—two major coalitions in practically all the legislatures of India—shows the stabilisation of parliamentary practices. This is an issue with deep structural significance for the functioning of parliamentary democracy in India. Will India be able to continue the challenge of re-inventing the nation, balancing growth and justice, and sustaining democratic governance successfully, and yet keep her secular and democratic political system intact? The arguments and evidence that I have analysed in this book lead to cautious optimism. The country will stay the course, but in the short run, will continue to perplex both India-optimists and India-pessimists.

Notes

1 The catch phrase one hears most often in his speeches is 'sabka saath, sabka vikash' (Hindi for 'cooperation with all, development of all').

2 We learn from Barkha Dutt's widely read *India's Fault Lines* (2016), p. 302

All at once, India seems not just noisier, but also so much more bigoted. The shutting down of a concert by Pakistani ghazal singer Ghulam Ali, the smearing of journalist Sudheendra Kulkarni's face with ink because he invited a Pakistani to a book launch, the disruption of an India-Pakistan cricket meeting by the Shiv Sena in Mumbai—everyday seems to start with a new headline of dissonance.

3 "... modern India is in control of its own destiny. India's people hold the power to unlock their nation's full potential". McKinsey & Co., *Reimagining India: Unlocking the Potential of Asia's Next Superpower*, p. xxv.

4 It is often argued that India, with its wildly pluralistic society, factious democratic political system, and boisterous independent media, has the potential to show the world's other emerging markets that ethnic homogeneity and authoritarianism aren't the only—or even

the best—path to successful economic development... Today, almost seventy years since shaking off the yoke of British imperialism, India is reclaiming its historical prominence in the world economy. It has congratulated itself for “rising” and “shining”—but is it doing so as quickly or as brightly as it should?

McKinsey & Co., *Reimagining India: Unlocking the Potential of Asia's Next Superpower*, p. xvii

- 5 Some of these points that emerged in the course of Prime Minister Modi’s interview with Arnab Goswami on May 8, 2016, deserves our careful attention. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=892N6hiRpUM, visited on July 8, 2016.
- 6 How quaint it sounds when one reads Kipling today! “India is the one place in the world where a man can do as he pleases and nobody asks why” we learn from Kipling (1895), ‘The Miracle of Purun Bhagat’, *The Jungle Book II*, p. 23. India is a much more organised society today than under British rule. The mystical holy men are still around, but so are the world media, interviewing, and seeking to stich it all together into a cohesive picture of a bustling, diverse, democratic society that has tasted the forbidden fruits of economic prosperity and is hungry for more. Nothing connects like the logic of the capitalist market economy!
- 7 Compared to the earlier grand pronouncements and rhetorical flourishes, today one notices more tactical and nuanced thinking and fine-tuning of governance. The cabinet reshuffle—a traditional means of pitching the best talent available to a party to the Prime Minister for the maximum effect—is a case in point. Without the incessant and debilitating pressure from coalition partners as in the previous government of the UPA, the reshuffle of the council of ministers could induct a strategic selection of ministers, intended to project representation of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, regions of India, and performance. A report in the *Hindu* presents it as “bolstering the talent pool with ‘doers’”. “Eye on poll-bound States, Modi to expand Cabinet” *The Hindu*, July 5, 2016.
- 8 A close parallel is the case of Lal Bahadur Shastri, whose career was tragically cut short by a fatal heart attack, in Taskent in 1966. See Srivastava (1995).
- 9 See Anant Vijay Kala and Eric Bellman, “Modi’s first two years: Economic report card”, in the *Wall Street Journal*, <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2016/05/25/modis-first-two-years-economic-report-card/> which focuses mostly on the economy and, Raj Chengappa, “Now for the hard part: Narendra Modi”, in *India Today*, May 23, 2016. The *Wall Street Journal* presents Modi more as “an economic policy tinkerer than the radical reformer some optimists has expected.”
- 10 Kala and Bellman, op. cit. They also point out that though the results of some of the measures taken by the government have not paid off yet, they are a sound investment in the future. They quote from a research note by the Standard Chartered Bank: “We think, most investors under-appreciate the medium-to long-term positive impact of some of the policies being pursued by the current government. Although policy-changes have been gradual and incremental, they are moving in the right direction.” The article also focused on policy failures in the areas of key legislation such as the Goods and Services Tax and land acquisition to get parliamentary approval.
- 11 Raj Chengappa, op. cit. pp. 19–20.
- 12 Chengappa, op. cit. p. 22.
- 13 My arguments in this book are meant to show how the Indian political system connects the most simple and general assumptions about strategic political behavior and its consequence, in the Indian case, for democracy and development. The quotation from Nietzsche in the epigraph to the previous chapter succinctly sums up this general argument.
- 14 Kay Lawson (2008: 524) refers to India as ‘the world’s most complicated democracy’. ‘It is too simple to call [India’s] rise a great accomplishment and leave it at that, but also too simple to dismiss the claim as unworthy of a nation in which serious poverty remains so widespread as to make politics all but irrelevant to the daily chore of achieving survival. The truth is multifaceted, and incompletely before us’.
- 15 For a strong criticism of Indian ambiguity, see Siddarth Varadarajan, ‘After evidence dossier, direct accusation against Pakistan strikes discordant note’, *The Hindu*, 8 January, 2009. One can sense a tragic *déjà vu* following the botched Ufa dialogue, and the subsequent terrorist attack on Pathankot. See Subrata Mitra, ‘After Ufa: Why the India–Pakistan Dialogue needs to be reconceptualised on the lines of ‘Principled Negotiations’’, ISAS Working Paper, no. 209, Institute of South Asian Studies (NUS, Singapore), 27 September 2015.

- 16 See Riaz Hasan, ed. *Indian Muslims: Struggling for Equal Citizenship* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; 2016) for a critical examination of the condition of Muslims in India.
- 17 The mass upsurge that has followed the killing of the declared terrorist Burhan Wani in Kashmir is indicative of the long trail of political disenchantment that underpins terrorism.
- 18 Khan (2007) corroborates some of the interview data regarding violence against women in the Partition riots of 1947–1948 reported by Sudhir Kakar (see Kakar 1995). Khan writes, ‘Women’s bodies were marked and branded, with the slogans of freedom, “Pakistan Zindabad” and “Jai Hind”, inscribed on their faces and breasts. At least a third of the brutalized bodies recovered later were those of girls under the age of 12.’ Cited in Deb (2008), p. 40.
- 19 Deb (2009) makes this point in his review of two excellent books on the Partition of India: Khan (2007) and Zamindar (2007). ‘Partition was not’, he maintains, ‘the clean break claimed by national histories.’ The violence of the Partition was largely ‘willed’ by the Indian and Pakistani leadership on both sides of the border, where the new elites in power were redefining their national space (pp. 40–41).
- 20 See Mitra, Subrata Mitra, ed. *Citizenship and the Flow of Ideas in the Era of Globalization: Structure, Agency, and Power* (Delhi: Samskriti; 2011), and ‘Citizenship in India: Preliminary Results of a National Survey, 2009’, *Economic and Political Weekly of India* Vol. XLV, No. 9 (February 27, 2010), pp. 46–54.
- 21 The latest findings from the Pew Research Center on Global Attitudes and Trends provide some interesting insights on the popular perception of India under Modi.

Two years into his tenure, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to ride a wave of public good feeling about the way things are going in India, the state of the domestic economy and his own stewardship of the country. About two-thirds of the Indian public is satisfied with the direction of the country and eight-in-ten think that the country is doing well. A similarly large proportion has a favourable view of Modi, a sentiment that is down slightly from 2015.

(p. 1)

The report goes on to make some comparisons between the state of the nation today as compared to the past.

The Indian public’s satisfaction with the direction of the country has increased 36 percentage points since 2013, the year before Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took power. Views on the economy have improved by 23 points. And belief that today’s children will be better off financially than their parents is up 8 points. A strong majority (81%) of Indians hold a favourable view of Modi, including 57% who have a very favourable opinion of him. A similar proportion of the public (80%) expresses a positive view of the BJP.

(p. 2)

See Bruce Stokes (www.pewresearch.org/staff/bruce-stokes), “India and Modi: the Honeymoon Continues”, in www.pewglobal.org/2016/09/19/india-and-modi-the-honeymoon-continues/.

- 22 On this critical issue, see Subrata Mitra, ‘Encapsulation without Integration? Electoral Democracy and the Ambivalent Moderation of Hindu Nationalism in India’, *Studies in Indian Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2016), pp. 90–101.

11 Notes on further reading

The revolution in information technology and the new global economic linkages have lifted parts of the Indian population to levels of living and lifestyles comparable to those of the affluent West. However vast sections of the population are still mired in poverty and insecurity, struggling with poor infrastructure. Despite the modern lifestyles and consumption that one notices in the middle and upper middle classes, large sections of the Indian population remain steeped in traditional ways. The economic and political institutions of India are often anchored in vernacular categories and local contexts, notwithstanding their modern veneer. To Western students of India's economics and politics, specific features of Indian politics such as the hiatus between modernity and tradition and the sporadic outbreak of Maoist violence (long extinct in China, its country of origin) might appear exotic or archaic. Some of these themes have been covered in this introductory level. For those who wish to delve deeper into the challenge of understanding India, the sources referred to in this section will be a useful guide.

General

The general literature on India has grown greatly in volume, keeping pace with the rising prominence of the country. The limitations of space make it possible to provide only a glimpse into this vast body of books and articles. I list in this section other books of general interest, history, political theory and travelogues.

Jeannine Auboyer, *Daily Life in Ancient India: From 200BC to 700AD* (London: Phoenix; 2007), and Michael Edwardes, *Everyday Life in Early India* (London: B.T. Batsford; 1969), are both excellent introductions to life in ancient India. For the linkage to classical foundations of Indian politics, Subrata Mitra and Michael Liebig, *Kautilya's Arthashastra—An Intellectual Portrait—Classical Origins of Modern Politics in India* (Baden Baden: Nomos; 2016) would be useful. For the adaption of indigenous categories for modern usage, see Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press; 1967), and Julia Hegewald and Subrata Mitra, eds., *Re-use: the Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety* (New Delhi: Sage; 2012). Those with a taste for fiction might enjoy E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* as windows into life under the British Raj and social life in North India in the 1950s. Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London: Macmillan; 2007), Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (Delhi: Penguin; 1997), Pawan Varma, *Being Indian: The Truth About Why the Twenty-First Century will be India's* (Delhi: Penguin; 2004), and Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of India* (London: Little, Brown; 2006), are good general introductions to the vibrant everyday

life of contemporary India. Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound: From Independence to the Global Information Age* (Delhi: Penguin; 2002), and Achin Vanaik, *The Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in India* (London: Verso Books; 1990), offer contrasting views of the problems and potentials of Indian society and the economy. Ravi Veloor's *India Rising: Fresh Hopes, New Fears* (Singapore: Straits Times Press; 2016) and McKinsey and Co. *Reimagining India: Unlocking the Potential of Asia's Next Superpower* (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2013), and Barkha Dutt *This Unquiet Land: Stories from India's Fault Lines* (Delhi: Aleph; 2016) are, in their own ways, most insightful introductions for the general reader. Subrata Mitra, Siegfried Wolf and Jivanta Schoettli, *A Political and Economic Dictionary of South Asia* (London: Routledge; 2006), and Subrata Mitra (ed.), *A Critical Guide to the Modern Politics of South Asia* (London: Routledge; 2008), are both accessible sources on the institutions and politics in India.

Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, (revised edition) (Cambridge: CUP; 1992), offers good coverage in terms of social and economic issues. Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Polity Press; 2000), and Robert L. Hardgrave and Stanley A. Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation* (Boston, MA: Thomson Higher Education; 2008), offer a developmental perspective, but from contrasting angles. Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge: CUP; 1995), is a highly thematic and comparative overview, principally contrasting India and Pakistan in the immediate wake of Partition. Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence* (London: Hurst; 1997), and Ian Copland, *India, 1885–1947* (London: Pearson; 2001), are excellent introductions to the historical background of modern India. Ramesh Thakur, *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Macmillan; 1995), and Sumit Ganguly and Neil DeVotta, *Understanding Contemporary India* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner; 2003), are both interesting and useful textbooks. W.H. Morris-Jones, *Government and Politics of India* [revised edition of original publication in 1967] (Eothen Publishing; 1987) and Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (London: Sangam, 1970), though dated, are still very influential. Lloyd I. and Susanne H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1987), is a fine example of an analysis of India's political economy that remains deeply grounded in India's political culture and history. Readers with limited time who wish to have a concise and comprehensive introduction to Indian politics should refer to Subrata Mitra, 'India' in Comparative Politics Today eds. G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Russell Dalton and Kaare Strom, (New York: Longman; 2012). Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* (Delhi: OUP; 2010) offers a set of excellent articles on a broad range of topics from Indian politics.

Democracy and the modern institutions of India

Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Mumbai: OUP; 1966), Durga D. Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall; 1985), and Richard Park and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *India's Political System* (Delhi: Prentice-Hall; 1967), are general introductions to the founding of a modern political system in India. Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (eds), *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design* (Delhi: OUP; 2005), is a very good introduction to the performance of India's modern institutions. Subrata K. Mitra, *The Puzzle of India's Governance: Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (London: Routledge; 2005), provides a formal analysis of political order and democracy in India.

A clutch of articles in learned journals from the early decades of the twentieth-century and in the closing years of colonial rule testify to modern politics as the harbinger of change.¹ Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (1987) brings a method rich with historical and anthropological insights to the field, and rewards the student of politics with an access to the deep, subterranean springs of legitimacy in societies where ‘gods have not yet died’.² Arendt Lijphart (1996) complements the explanatory power of ‘path dependency’, which is mainly the role of the past in understanding the present through the effects of institutional arrangement. In his analysis of the ‘puzzle’ of India’s democracy, he shows how India reconciles majority rule, with its tendency for the winners to ‘take all’, balancing it with various forms of power-sharing which make it possible for the minority to enjoy office, in proportion to their strength. Also, see Subrata Mitra, ‘How exceptional is Indian democracy? Path dependency, political capital and context in South Asia’, *India Review* 12(4), October 2013 for the general lessons of Indian democracy.

The Indian case, something of a model when it comes to transition to democracy, has engaged a number of scholars. The structure and process of the post-colonial state are best explained in two seminal articles by Rajni Kothari, published in 1964 and 1974.³ These articles explain the mechanism of intra-party factionalism which introduced a degree of competition to a system where power did not alternate between competing political parties. Further insights into this remarkable phenomenon of democracy striking root on alien soil are provided by Weiner (1964) and Morris-Jones (1967) who show how a pattern of sophisticated, institutionalized power-sharing underpins the first impression of Indian politics as chaotic. Zagoria’s analysis (1971) of the social base of India’s communist movement provides insight into the process of party formation. Other critical contributions to the study of India’s political parties are Franda (1969) on the steady fragmentation of the Communist Party,⁴ and Erdman’s (1963–4) depiction of the Swatantra—India’s one and only liberal party which has become defunct over the past decades.⁵ The steady proliferation of the norms of political competition and the ‘routinization of change’ are introduced by Michael Brecher (1967).

The unravelling of the state and the recovery of order is taken up by Mitra (1980), the subversion of democratic institutions by the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi by Das Gupta (1978) and, subsequently, the crisis of India’s modern institutions by Kaviraj (1984). The mechanisms of the recovery of order have been delineated by several scholars: Subrata K. Mitra, *Power, Protest and Participation: Local Elites and the Politics of Development in India* (London: Routledge; 1992), and Subrata K. Mitra and Alison Lewis (eds), *Subnational Movements in South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview; 1996), analyse the coping mechanisms of the Indian state in the face of challenges from sub-national movements. In a prescient article on the fluidity and flexibility of India’s party politics, Brass (1968) showed how the Indian political system made its transition from the charismatic leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru to the collective leadership of the Congress party, and subsequently from the dominant role of the Congress to multi-party coalitions based on competition and collaboration of party, faction and individual leaders in the politics of North India.⁶ This structural duality of the Indian political system whips up passion and the urge for upward mobility by marginal social groups. Simultaneously, it threatens to overtake the capacity of the state to meet these new demands. The conflation of institutional participation anti-institutional protest produces new methods of allocation to cope with unrest. This reveals an innate, innovative capacity of the political system which appears to draw strength from crises that threaten stability. See Subrata K. Mitra, Mike Enskat and Clemens Spiess, *Political Parties in South Asia* (Westport, CT: Praeger;

2004). Other essays on this theme cover: the role of political parties and the resilience of the system (Chhibber and Petrocik 1989); the role of consociational and federal forms of institutional arrangements (Adeney 2002), the role of power-sharing and development (Sinha 2003) and the resilience of India's democracy (Varshney 2000). The same general argument has been reinforced by Sridharan (2005) who has shown that the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party has come about through the strategy of broad-based coalitions which stymie political excesses as a price of power.⁷ See Subrata Mitra, 'The ambivalent moderation of Hindu in India' Australian Journal of Political Science 2013, 48(3), pp. 269–285. Ganguly (1996) demonstrates how, even as a deviant case, political insurgency in Kashmir originates more from the decline of modern institutions than from a rejection of modernity by a rival ideology with greater popular support.⁸ For negotiation failure as a cause of continued insurgency in Kashmir, see Subrata Mitra and Radu Carciuamaru, 'Beyond the "low-level-equilibrium-trap": Getting to a Principled Negotiation of the Kashmir Conflict' in Irish Studies in International Affairs, vol 26 (2015), 1–24. Mitra (2008) shows how the level of governance goes up when decision-making elites respond to challenges to order through policies that combine sanctions with strategic reform and the accommodation of identity.

Social change: from hierarchy to equality

Freedom from alien rule and the promise of social change constituted the twin threads of the anti-colonial movement. The social agenda that united the various strands of the Freedom Movement resurfaced as the core social policy of the post-colonial state following the Transfer of Power. In his influential 'Caste in Modern India', Srinivas (1957) lays down the main norms of analysis for a social structure in flux. The internal structure of this complex world where social hierarchy found its match in the egalitarian impulse of modernity is the theme of Susanne H. Rudolph (1961), Marc Galanter (1963), Lloyd I. Rudolph (1965) and Richard G. Fox (1969). Two influential articles—Inden (1986) and Madan (1987)—assert the Otherness of South Asian societies, which need to be considered in their terms of the singularity of their discourse, normative structures, the inner conflicts of tradition and the endogenous impulses towards authenticity and change. Judith Brown's 'The Mahatma and Modern India' (1969) rounds off these canonical writings by drawing attention to the ambiguity—at once subjugating and sublimating—of the import of Gandhi's thought regarding society, modernity and change in India. Subrata K. Mitra and V.B. Singh, *When Rebels become Stakeholders* (Delhi: Sage; 2009), provides an analysis of social attitudes and mobility that addresses some of these issues, based on social and political attitudes.

Following Independence, when the logic of universal adult franchise and competitive politics set in (Nandy 1970), subaltern agency, thanks to the impact of institutional changes, modern political communication, and the political connectivity stimulated by vote-hungry politicians and caste associations, found a new voice in the public sphere. The political sociology of state-society interactions in South Asia that resulted from the process has generated a rich array of essays. Mitra (1995), Manor (1996) and Wilkinson (2000) provide a general introduction to the instrumental character of subaltern agency which aims at both material gain and new visions of modernity as their twin objectives. Insightful essays on specific groups such as Baruah (2003) on the Nagas, Caiman (1989) on women's movements, Jaffrelot (2000) on Other Backward Classes, Katzenstein (1973) on the Shiv Sena and Wallace (1986) on Sikhs are some of

the fascinating essays that illustrate the autonomous character of Indian modernity. These studies that question the canon of social change inspired by the West, even as it implements the policies inspired by it.⁹ Ram Prasad on ‘Hindutva’ (1993) and Amrita Basu on ‘Community Conflicts and the State’ (1997) on the one hand, and Binder (1958) and Nasr (1995) on the other, indicate the transformative power of competitive politics that has brought about the fusion of imported and indigenous norms of modernity, producing a set of rules and attitudes uniquely South Asian. With regard to the implications for citizenship, see, Subrata Mitra, ‘Citizenship in India: Preliminary results of a national survey, 2009’ *Economic and Political Weekly of India*, XLV, no. 9, 46–54, Feb 27, 2014.

The economy

Arvind Panagariya, *India: The Emerging Giant* (New York: OUP; 2008), is a comprehensive account of India’s economy. Pranab Bardhan’s *The Political Economy of Development in India* (Delhi: OUP; 1984), gives a very good insight into the political economy of pre-liberalization India. The structure of India’s model of development and the relevant aspects of general theories of growth are delineated, respectively, in Malenbaum (1958) and Cohen (1955). Ilchman (1967) explains the irony of a model of development that aimed at import substitution but nevertheless required substantial amounts of foreign aid to maintain its pace. Though based on the classic assumption that agricultural surplus would be invested in industry and infrastructure to generate momentum for economic development, the Indian case nevertheless needed to give special attention to the agrarian sector. The Indian peasant, the potential victim of industry like peasants in the context of Europe’s industrialization, has been able to offer resistance, thanks to the right to vote. Democracy gave a political motivation to the modern state to protect the interests of the peasant through a variety of special programmes, subsidies and reform. The complex consequences for growth, development and democracy are discussed by Francine Frankel (1969) and Barbara Harriss (1972), two leading authors in this field who approach the peasant with great empathy.¹⁰

The Indian model, eclectic in view of its attempts to combine elements of capitalistic, socialistic and communitarian models of development, did manage to sustain both democracy and a modest rate of growth during the early years after Independence. However, with the acceleration of expectations and relative decline in the capacity of the system to meet them, India’s political economy started generating corruption, relative deprivation, problems of governance and negative consequences for the environment. In their insightful essay on the ‘Pyraveekar’—the all-purpose fixers of India—Reddy and Hargopal (1985) explain the structural origin of corruption, and what the diverting of resources into non-developmental purposes meant for development. The opposite side of the picture, where the commission-agent also acts as a local leader—*gaon ka neta*—providing agency to people at the lowest levels of the system, and who functions as the cutting edge of local democracy, is discussed in Mitra (1991). The structural basis of poverty is discussed in Kohli’s seminal essay (1983–84) on ‘Regime Types and Poverty Reform’ where he shows why some regimes strike at the roots of poverty, while others, where political power lies mostly in the hands of the better-off classes, leave mass poverty untouched. Bob Currie (1996) raises the issue of democracy and the problem of economic adjustment. Swain (1996) elaborates on another salient issue pertaining to the intricate relationship between environmental degradation and ethnic conflict, which

is likely to remain on the agenda of the economy, environment and ethnic conflict in South Asia in the immediate future.

The radical restructuring of India's economy that started in 1991 has since been known as 'liberalization'. This major overhaul of policy is discussed in detail by Montek S. Ahluwalia (2002). A member of the team of economists which, under the leadership of Manmohan Singh, then the finance minister of India, was responsible for initiating the policy changes that subsequently came to be known as 'liberalization of the economy', Ahluwalia critically evaluated 'gradualism', seen by many as the cornerstone of Indian policy of structural change. The specific implications of liberalization are taken up by several essays in this section. Mukherji (2004), the first of these, discusses the role of independent regulatory commissions in managing competition in India. Lawrence Saez (1999) analyses the implications of the unravelling of the centralized economy, watched over by the central government and the Planning Commission from the 'commanding heights of the economy', and the birth of the federal market economy. He explains how the new political economy has given greater initiative to those responsible for policy making and implementation at the lower levels of the system, and facilitated competition and collaboration among concerned departments of the regional governments. Finally, Devesh Kapur (2002), with a focus on the IT industry, analyses the causes and consequences of the great strides made by the service sector of India's economy.

No discussion of economic change in a post-colonial context would be complete without a special mention of the social sector. The classic victims of growth—peasants, workers, and those likely to be displaced from their traditional homeland because of the needs of industry and urbanization—are also veto players in the political system, thanks to the media and the countervailing forces of democracy. The need to 'rationalize' the labour component of the process of production and the resistance of unionized labour to such attempts are discussed by Roy Chowdhury (2003) in an essay based on field studies and interviews from several industrial sites in India. Rob Jenkins (2004) continues the discussion with an analysis of the symbiotic relation between liberalization and the labour market. Finally, in his comprehensive analysis of the implications of liberalization and globalization on social stability, Baldev Raj Nayar (2007) provides valuable insights into why the radical restructuring of India's economy has not led to the chaos that one has seen in the former Soviet Union and socialist economies of Eastern Europe in the wake of the break-up of communist rule. Rahul Mukherji's *Political Economy of Reforms in India* (Delhi: OUP) provides a broad spectrum of the inaccessible field.

International relations

The peculiar combination of national self-assertion and non-violence that characterized the anti-colonial movement in South Asia distinguished it from the revolutionary fervour and violent politics of similar movements in South-East Asia and Africa. The consequence for the international politics of the successor states is analysed in this volume. The shape of future politics of these states with regard to the international arena—thanks to the long apprenticeship of these states under their colonial master—is analysed by no less a figure than Mahatma Gandhi (1931).¹¹ However, whereas Gandhi had the vision of British India passing into a confederation of village republics, and an agrarian economy which met local needs through local resources, the steadily unfolding forces of state formation, nation building and economic development found a new focus in the state and the modern politics of South Asia.¹²

Indian foreign policy of the early years after Independence, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, found an anchor in the concept of non-alignment. *Panchasheela*—the five principles of peaceful co-existence as it came to be known—emerged as the founding principle of the non-alignment movement. The essays in this category delineate the main foundations of Indian foreign policy during the formative decades (Appadurai 1949; Edwardes 1965). The economic dimensions of this policy are discussed by Cohen (1955). Under colonial rule, the government of India had positioned the country as an outpost of the British Empire and had protected the boundaries of the colony through the combination of imperial military power and strategic buffer states. Both these policies were put into question by the new principle of non-alignment and the search for trust and cooperation (as symbolized by *Panchasheela*) rather than force as the basis of politics. Stephen Cohen—*India: Emerging Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution 2001)—offers a strategic study of India as an emerging power. The transition from the one to the other led to problems of uncertainty regarding the status of the former buffer zones, discussed by Leo Rose (1963), and border war with China (Maxwell 1970; Hoffmann 1972; Cohen 1975).

As already indicated above, the non-aligned foreign policy of independent India sought to achieve a double goal, namely, the transformation of India from British colony to independent state, and from being part of the imperial economy to becoming an independent economy through planning and import substitution. However, the transition was not quite as smooth as the authors of this policy had anticipated. The rise of South Asia's economies was affected by the movement of capital and products internationally.¹³ In addition, India's non-aligned policy was vigorously contested by Pakistan which keenly sought alliances as a counterweight to the asymmetry of its size and strength vis-à-vis India. The consequent security dilemma (Dittmer 2001) and the role of China in South Asia's international relations—within the region as well as with powers exogenous to it—have had a deep implication for war and peace in South Asia (Mitra 2001).

The anomalies emerging from a foreign policy based on non-alignment and peaceful co-existence led to its vigorous questioning during Nehru's lifetime but became the staple for foreign policy debates after 1964. India's policies were radically different from the policies of her two immediate rivals, Pakistan and China. These debates came to a peak in the late 1960s, following Nehru's death in 1964, which was, incidentally, also the year of the first Chinese nuclear test. Speculations about India's attempt to go fully nuclear, following the 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion' of 1974, became a kind of parlour game among foreign policy experts. A series of scholarly articles has recorded the events preceding and following the 1998 tests that established the nuclear status of India and Pakistan in the most unambiguous terms. These developments are reported in Hagerty (1995), Ganguly (1999), Basrur (2001) and Sagan (2001). The essay by Sreeram S. Chaulia (2002) registers the paradigm shift in India's foreign policy from Nehru's renunciation of force as the basis of foreign policy to the 'realism' of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Why cooperation among the states of South Asia has had only limited success is the main question raised by Ross Mallick (1993). A variation on this theme is the inability of India and Pakistan to come to an institutional arrangement for the safeguard of their nuclear establishments. The theme is succinctly discussed by Perkovich (1993) in an insightful piece. The article is indicative of the state of play regarding academic research on the nuclearisation of South Asia during these critical years. The article is clairvoyant in view of the fact that it appeared three years before India and Pakistan went

nuclear publicly. The role of confidence building measures (CBMs), often announced with much fanfare by India and Pakistan locked into a no-war, no-peace situation, is critically analysed by Chari (2005). The same issue is raised in reference to institutional methods of arms control with a view to generating strategic stability by Rodney Jones (2005). The two further essays—Mistry (2004) and Mitra and Schoettli (2007)—focus on India as an emerging power and as a possible fulcrum of South Asia's regional politics, and analyse the ambiguities that mark India's foreign policy. Sumit Ganguly, *Indian Foreign Policy* (Delhi: OUP; 2015) is a good, comprehensive analysis of this challenging theme.¹⁴

Notes

- 1 H. McD. Clokie, 'The New Constitution for India', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 30, No. 6 (December 1936), pp. 1152–65; Taraknath Das, 'India—Past, Present and the Future', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (June 1947), pp. 295–304; and Richard Symonds, 'State-Making in Pakistan', *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 5 (8 March 1950), pp. 45–50.
- 2 Susanne Hoeber Rudolph has developed the theme further in her presidential address to the American Political Science Association, 2004. See Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, 'The Imperialism of Categories: Situating Knowledge in a Globalizing World', *Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March 2005), pp. 5–14.
- 3 Kothari, Rajni, 'The Congress "System" in India', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (December 1964), pp. 1161–73; Rajni Kothari, 'The Congress System Revisited: A Decennial Review', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 12 (December 1974), pp. 1035–54.
- 4 Marcus F. Franda, 'India's Third Communist Party', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 9, No. 11 (November 1969), pp. 797–817.
- 5 Howard L. Erdman, 'India's Swatantra Party', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 1963–64), pp. 394–410.
- 6 Brass (1968).
- 7 E. Sridharan, 'Coalition Strategies and the BJP's Expansion, 1989–2004', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (July 2005), pp. 194–221.
- 8 Sumit Ganguly, 'Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay', *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Autumn 1996), pp. 76–107.
- 9 For an examination of the struggle over the birthplace of Rama in Ayodhya see Peter Van der Veer, "'God must be Liberated!' A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1987), pp. 283–301; and on the empowerment of Dalits through party agency, see Kanchan Chandra, 'The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India: The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (February 2000), pp. 26–61.
- 10 Examining how a democratic state deals with crises, Paul Brass's study of the 1966–67 Bihar famine provides valuable insights into the complex forces that lead to a critical situation with regard to the availability of food and the articulation of the situation as one of crisis. See Paul Brass, 'The Political Uses of Crisis: The Bihar Famine of 1966–67', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (February 1986), pp. 245–71.
- 11 M.K. Gandhi, 'The Future of India', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931–1939)*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (November 1931), pp. 721–39.
- 12 See Holden Furber, 'The Unification of India, 1947–51', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1951), pp. 352–71.
- 13 For a study of the intersection between the compulsions of the world system and regional economies see David Washbrook, 'South Asia, the World System, and World Capitalism', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (August 1990), pp. 479–508.
- 14 Also see Bajpai, Nirupam, *Global Financial Crisis, its Impact on India and the Policy Response* (New York: Columbia Global Centers, 2011).

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